Haven Harbour Marina

1998 Marina of the Year

by Ed Gubbins

Haven Harbour Marina was built on the verdant banks of history, in a quiet inlet of the Chesapeake Bay known as Swan Creek. History is hinted at in the old-world spelling of the marina's name. It's respectfully retold in the marina's brochures, which trace the area's commercial fishing heritage back to the
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1986. The Brawner Co. dredged the entire marina, rebuilt the docks and renovated the main buildings while retaining the character and charm of the community.

Like the marina, the town of Rock Hall in which it's located bears a blend of historical and contemporary influences. "Rock Hall has undergone a huge transformation over the years, but it still is a small fishing village of a few hundred families, and that was true 100 years ago," said Jonathan Jones, general manager of Haven Harbour Marina.

"As the fishing industry is in somewhat of a decline, recreational boating has begun to take its place." And as Brawner's vision of a more progressive yet historically reverent marina took the place of existing facilities, Jones signed on in 1990 to be a part of it.

"Bill saw a lot of marinas that were kind of run-down boatyards with jackstands and oil drums around, but there were a couple of them that were beginning to understand that you had to provide land-based recreational amenities—a place to get something to eat, a pool, nicely landscaped grounds, shuffleboard, croquet, horseshoes, paddleboats, bicycles. We find quite a few of our slip holders go out sailing and come back here because there's nowhere else as nice to go." With much of the Chesapeake Bay available for boaters to cruise, there is no higher compliment.

"There's a tremendous amount of attention to detail in terms of the maintenance here. When you walk around, you don't find cigarette butts in the parking lot; you don't find the ashtrays full; you don't find spiderwebs on the power pedestals because they're washed once a month. The place is kept very well organized. It looks like a country club here, yet we're a serious working boat yard, and I think we hide that very well."

Jones' hiding places include two main repair buildings. One is "the big shop," a heated, dye-controlled 60-by-40-foot building that the TraveLift drives into where paint jobs and larger repairs are performed. The other building is used for fiberglass and rudder repairs of smaller boats.

The staff also uses a 60-by-24-foot mobile tent that can be wheeled around and draped over vessels. "It's translucent, so even in the middle of winter, it could be 70 degrees inside the tent just from the solar gain," said Jones. "Plus we can boat it so it provides another indoor work space during the winter months. And people love to have indoor storage, so if we were doing a major lamination job that takes a month, the customers have indoor storage for the period of time that the boat's being worked on."

What Jones doesn't try to hide is the work being done on his customers' boats. "There's got to be a lot of follow-up, a lot of customer contact," he insists. "We leave what we call 'on-board reports' on every boat that we work on to let the customer know when we were there, what we did and what condition we left the boat in. We call, fax and e-mail customers. We have a digital camera we use if we're right in the middle of a job and we encounter something unusual or something we're trying to show a customer. We can take a visual image of what we're trying to describe and e-mail it right to the customer."

"The classic thing with boat repairs is a customer being told it's going to cost $10,000 to get his engine replaced, and the next thing he knows, he gets the bill and it's $15,000," said Jones. "You avoid those things by staying in communication with your boat owner."

After the boat has been serviced, customers are given a questionnaire to

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This translucent mobile tent acts as a不可缺少 third service building for the marina's extensive repair and maintenance operations.

General Manager Jonathan Jones (above) came to Haven Harbour Marina in 1990, bringing 20 years of experience with him.

Kids compete in a donut-eating contest as part of Family Day, an annual event held in June that includes a balloon toss, a dunking booth and other fun activities.
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and gas mechanical work, major engine overhauls, fabrication, carpentry, and cabinetry work, they've earned a deeper definition of "full-service." "Many marinas say they're full-service because they have tenants or subcontractors that come in and provide the services," said Jones. "We made the decision a while ago to handle all the services here under one roof and under our control." Jones says the profits from his service operation may soon meet or exceed those from slip rental, which suggests the decision was a good one.

HAVEN HARBOUR MARINA has also earned respect for its decisions in environmental policy, including its commitment to dust-free sanding. With sailboaters comprising a good portion of the slip renters, the marina's dust-free sanding policy applies to employees and slip holders alike. Tarps are also placed under every boat being sanded for the collection and proper disposal of any debris. To Jones, this is purely common sense, as the buildup of copper and toxic chemicals in the sand can create enormous liability. "If you're constantly sanding off bottom paint and letting other chemicals into the ground, every time it rains, that stuff ends up in the water, and what is the water? It's the playground. It's where we make our money. This pretty creek out here in the bay that everyone enjoys seeing the ducks and fish and crabs in, it's only of value if it's clean," said Jones.

A vegetated buffer surrounds the perimeter of the marina with foliage and wood chips to filter storm water runoff before it drains into the creek. The Travel Lift wash-down area is equipped with a catch basin that empties all pressure-wash water into a three-chambered cistern to filter out sediment and particulate matter. Water in the cistern is therefore filtered three times before its return to the creek, and the cistern is emptied two or three times a year in an approved lined landfill. Jones says he foresees such practices becoming mandatory in the future and looks forward even greater strides. In Broward County, Fla., there's a guy named Scott Miser with Associated Marine Technologies who has the ability to recycle all of his pressure-washer water completely. It's a closed-loop system. We have one piece of that in place. At some point, we could recirculate the water further and reuse it. That may happen someday.

In the meantime, Jones gets slip holders involved in environmental maintenance by providing them with fuel containment booms on the docks, recycling bins on the shore and newsletters that keep them informed of earth-friendly products and practices, such as a bottle that collects over the fuel vents of boats, catching any escaping fuel. Jones said customers are usually eager to participate in the beautification of their marina, especially if it was beautiful when they found it.

As the public becomes more involved in keeping things clean, however, their demand for pumpout facilities has risen. "We had a dramatic increase in the amount of sewage we were asked to pump," said Jones, who replaced the marina's diaphragm pumpout with a vein-pump model, which he said is faster and more powerful.

The docks hold two of these facilities, allowing simultaneous pumpouts of two boats, and for $7 to $10 more per pumpout, those who don't want to wait can have their holding tanks emptied on Sundays by a company called Safe Harbor Sanitation. Not only are pumpout services a must, said Jones, but "you have to make it accessible. You have to make it easy."

The general manager's mission is to provide this ease in as many areas as possible. "In boatyards, if there's a charge for collection of I-contaminated fuel or antifreeze, it usually ends up either being drained in the parking lot, being pumped overboard or whatever," said Jones. "We have an environmental compliance charge of 1/2 percent on all of our work orders, and that allows us to collect all of the stuff and pay to have it disposed of."

Environmental responsibility can be used to the marina's advantage in many cases, Jones pointed out. For example, by adding recycling bins, Jones was able to reduce the volume of trash he paid to have hauled away by 20 to 25 percent.

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By collecting all his customers' waste oil in a specially designed furnace, Jones is able to heat the service buildings in winter.

And by collecting all his customers' waste oil in a specially designed furnace—a furnace specifically designed to burn waste oil—he is able to heat the service buildings in winter. Jones also helps a seat on Maryland's Clean Marina Committee, which has developed a guidebook and award program to inspire environmental awareness in the state's marinas. In addition, Jones plays host to the Living Classrooms Foundation, a non-profit outreach group that teaches hands-on ecology lessons to inner-city kids. Jones said activities like that one and allowing the local Brownie Girl Scout troop to hold swimming lessons in the marina's pool are a way of maintaining ties with the community.

The Brawner Co. has also worked to grow the community with the construction of eight single-family homes across the street from Haven Harbour. Marinas amenities are available to residents in "The Hamlet," as it's known, as well as to those who rent the nearby bungalow for the weekend.

"(The harbor) has a Victorian character to them. They were part of the vision," explained Jones. "We didn't come in here to try to make every dollar we could out of Rock Hall; we came in to try to create the wealth by creating this environment." We congratulate Haven Harbour Marina for their creation and for earning the 1998 Marina of the Year Award.

Recycling bins offer slip holders the chance to pitch in toward their marina's environmental efforts.