

## Selling the South

Cantina Cup Highlights SW and Maritime Organization, BID Highlights Restaurant Opportunities

BY KYLE JOHNSON

In only its second year, the Cantina Cup seems poised for a long-term hold on the Washington Channel.

The October sailboat race run by the National Maritime Heritage Foundation brought in more than 100 racers, more than double the turnout from last year. Spectators gathered at event partner Cantina Marina (600 Water St. SW) for a view of the action, as well as on other boats and waterside locations.

Blair Overman of NMHF said the event went well, bringing some new faces into the community and highlighting her organization.

The event, with three courses, had a lot of NMHF regulars and some of their friends, as well as some competitive international racers.

“And then we have some people who were out there just to have fun,” Overman said.

Two of the courses were in the channel, and a bigger boats course was run on the river. One of the downsides of sailing in a waterway as small as the channel is when sailboats are on course to collide with bigger, motorized boats, Overman said, because sailboats are unable to maneuver into the wind.

“It’s really difficult because unfortunately power-boaters just have no idea how sailboats work,” she said. “But no one got run over.”

After lots of time spent on the channel, the event ended with championship races and an after-party at Cantina Marina.

Overman said the event was a success, but next year event organizers want an expanded “big boats”



Racers compete in the Flying Junior racecourse on the Washington Channel. Two more racecourses, one on the channel and one on the Potomac River, were also used. Photo: Laura Overman

course on the Potomac River and more viewing points for spectators. Ideally, they will bring spectators out on boats to watch the race from the center of the channel.

### Keeping up the Work

The NMHF has a wide range of activities for sailing experts and novices of all ages. Adults can take lessons, rent boats and participate in races held frequently in the area. The organization’s 65-foot schooner, American Spirit, provides cruises, private charters and educational charters.

For youth, NMHF runs a two-month summer camp, a science- and math-based after-school program (Overman said the children learn about physics and angles through sailing) and a high school racing program. Many of the youth are awarded scholarships to participate free of charge.

Two fundraisers are set for this year to help cover the costs associated with the youth programs. On Nov. 4, an event will be held on the USS Sequoia Presidential Yacht to honor Ward 6 DC Councilmember Tommy Wells. A Christmas fundraiser will

also be held in early December. For more information on either event, visit the NMHF’s website, [www.nmhf.org](http://www.nmhf.org), or e-mail Overman at [boverman@nmhf.org](mailto:boverman@nmhf.org).

### A Unique Opportunity

On the heels of announcements that vacant M Street SE office buildings will be leased by the Bureau of Land Management and a government contractor starting next spring, the Capitol Riverfront Business Improvement District has ramped up its sales pitch for businesses with an eye on the community.

A retail summit sponsored by the DC Economic Partnership highlighted the current and coming attractions in the Capitol Riverfront area. The event primarily focused on retail and restaurant opportunities.

Michael Stevens, BID executive director, said about 27 percent of the projected build-out is in operation now. Eventually, the community will have more than 100,000 daytime employees, or three times the current figure, and another 1,000 or so hotel rooms will be built in the future.

Although those figures suggest that the area's population is far from the projections for when building is completed, Stevens said now was still a good time for retailers and restaurants to come in.

"We say that the concrete and steel seeds were planted and have taken root," he said, highlighting the high occupancy rates at many of the neighborhood's apartment and condominium buildings completed in recent years. "We have just the beginnings of neighborhood support retail."

Doug Olsen, vice president of leasing for Monument Realty, said that one of the most important factors spurring development interest in the community is practical.

"What major metropolitan area in the country can you go into, go into the city proper ... and scrape it all and start over? That's what's happening here, and it's incredible," he said. "This stuff takes time, but the numbers are real, and they're compelling."

Monument Realty owns the building where Olsen was speaking, and the east side of the Half Street project will be built by the company.

Olsen called the community (and "NoMa," the neighborhood North of Massachusetts Avenue) "release valves for a city with little space left to develop," and he felt confident that ultimately consumers will pick Capitol Riverfront over NoMa.

"Five years from today, you'll be shocked by what this neighborhood looks like. Ten years from

now, you'll be blown away."

### Coming Soon

Two retailers with success in the neighborhood, and a third who is hoping to find success when his store opens later this year, also pitched the neighborhood to the business folks in attendance at the summit.

Justin Ross is opening the 1,500-square-foot Justin's Café at First and L streets SE later this year. Ross said the establishment on the ground floor of the Velocity Condominiums building will feature wood-oven pizzas, sandwiches and salads, as well as a bar with happy hour specials.

"My attraction to this area was to be a part of a new neighborhood," he said. "My main motive is to be a neighborhood place, and not just for people to come once or twice a year when they go to (baseball) games."

He's hoping that the restaurant will also be a hit with area office workers. Justin's Café will have a takeout window and a "fast-casual" lunch offering.

Mostafa Mohammad opened a Subway restaurant at 1100 New Jersey Ave. SE in 2004. His store has experienced double-digit growth in sales each year, he said, and the changing neighborhood has a lot to do with that.

"Every day I'm watching new developments coming in," he said.

Mohammad said that he plans to open more locations in the community when more developments are completed.

Cornercopia, at Third and K streets SE, is only a few months old, but Albert Oh said the store has performed better than expected to date. The store sells specialty grocery items and has a gourmet deli. Oh thought the deli would be just a small part of the business model, but instead it has accounted for nearly 70 percent of sales.

"If you are thinking about coming in to the area, I suggest it," he said to meeting attendees, noting that the community residents are "desperate" for more dining options. ★

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