

From Laurie Fullerton on board the Spirit of Bermuda—

## **Great Expectations**

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Marion, MA June 19, 2015: The Marion to Bermuda race began today and leading the fleet from the very start is the flagship “Spirit of Bermuda,” the 118-foot schooner/sloop from Bermuda. While the vessel is the only traditional craft in its class, with a surefire win under its belt from the start, the challenges the crew will face are unique and inspiring.

Chartered by Jim Butterfield, president and CEO of Butterfield & Vallis, the crew total is 24 and is primarily made up of company employees who signed up for the team building experience with no prior sailing experience. Butterfield and his son, Spencer, will be part of the team that is introducing the offshore sailing in their own unique way.

“For many of our staff, this is the first time they have sailed on a boat like this and it is their first time offshore,” Jim Butterfield said. It is neat for me to see them all together in this. There is my IT and computer man and the sales and service departments now sailing together on this vessel. We had 38 people sign up, and took the first 12 on the leg from Bermuda to New York. This group arrived to finish the trip home and participate in the Marion to Bermuda race. I am interested to see how people rise to the occasion.”

On that note, another member of the crew happens to be George Fergusson, the Governor of Bermuda. The governor joins the Butterfield & Vallis crew for his first ocean crossing as well. While the race begins Friday, the crew came together on Thursday for safety at sea training including man overboard and fire drills.

The Spirit of Bermuda crew is made up of many alumni of the eighth grade program available to all Bermudians. The crew have been a part of the vessel since their youngest days and many have gone on to careers in the merchant marine and overseas but return to the “Spirit” as often as they can.

According to Butterfield, “this is a treat for all of us. I grew up with some of these opportunities to do this kind of sailing and to be able to offer it to people in our company is a great opportunity. I would love to see more Bermuda companies do something like this.”

For Harley Hayward, warehouse operations manager, this is his first time making an ocean crossing and he sees it as a great adventure and a chance to get to know his colleagues better.

“I don’t know of five bosses in the world who would do this for his staff,” he said. “Already there are people I work with that I have gotten to know much better.” For Kelly Williams, human resources assistant, this is also her first offshore experience. “What I did to get ready for this was I began cross-fit training for two months. I feel that preparing for this trip offered me a chance to begin getting more fit. My children grew up sailing and now there will be three of us in the family who have done an ocean crossing. I feel that I will be more open for the next adventure This has started something.”

With racing beginning today, the crew on the Spirit of Bermuda will be divided into three watches. Each watch will have a professional crew member in the group and will be split into three watches – four hours on and eight hours off. With predicted weather conditions offering up everything from a tropical depression Bill looming, to the Gulf Stream crossing to the expected Bermuda high at the end of the race, the team will be tested and challenged and certainly know themselves and each other better when the team returns home.

- Laurie Fullerton