

# The Newport Daily News 2010 Community Service Award

## Winner Believes in Giving Back!



**By James J. Gillis**  
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When Juliette "Judy" McLennan attended boarding school as a teenager, a teacher told her she never would amount to anything. McLennan, who struggled with reading as a result of undiagnosed dyslexia, relayed the story to her parents and told them: "Just watch."

Since then, McLennan, 64, has raised 2 children, served as a United Nations ambassador, is an avid skier and sailor, established an annual regatta for sailors with disabilities and is one of three winners of the Newport Daily News 2010 Community Service Award.

In May, Judy McLennan was a recipient of the 2010 Newport Daily News Community Service Award, along with Nikki Vazquez and the late Donald Booth. The three were chosen from among 16 nominations submitted by local organizations to the Newport Daily News. A committee of local residents and previous winners reviewed the nominations and determined the winners, who were honored during a banquet in late April. During the festivities Judy was quoted as saying;

**"I grew up taught that you get involved in your community."**

Juliette "Judy" McLennan



Photograph courtesy of Amory Ross

McLennan, who lives in Portsmouth, grew up in Washington, D.C., but spent her childhood summers in Newport from the age of 6 months. "It was a big part of my life," she said. "I still have friends from my days as a girl on the beach."

McLennan, who served as managing director of Blair House, the official guest house of the President, became involved in politics in the 1970's, working on President Gerald Ford's failed re-election bid. After Ronald Reagan defeated President Jimmy Carter in 1980, she returned to political life, staying on with George H. W. Bush as an administrator on the status of women. That post turned into an ambassadorship to the United Nations Commission on the status of women. "It gave me an opportunity to travel and meet some wonderful people" she said.

A self-described "John Chafee Republican" McLennan retired from the political life after Bill Clinton knocked off the first President Bush in the 1992 election.

In 2002, McLennan moved to Maryland's Eastern Shore, near where she grew up. But she realized she would be happier on Aquidneck Island, a big part of her childhood, where her family sailed and her mother helped establish a junior sailing program at the Ida Lewis Yacht Club.

She spends three seasons a year on the island and her winters north of Montreal, where she skis. Locally, she volunteers with the Redwood Library, the Potter League for Animals (she owns 2 yellow labs) and the Seaman's Church Institute.

"Before I even moved up here, I had a friend getting me involved in the Redwood" she said. "I grew up taught that you get involved in your community. You do what you can and you give back. My parents felt strongly about that."

Annette Bourbonniere of Newport is one of several people who nominated McLennan for the award. Bourbonniere, a 2003 winner of the Community Service Award, praised McLennan for starting the C.

Thomas Clagett, Jr. Memorial Regatta in 2003. The event, named in honor of McLennan's late father, will be held this year from Aug. 22 - 26.

The regatta provides sailors with disabilities an opportunity to compete at a very high level. "In organizing the event," Bourbonniere wrote "she sought out the best available coaches and the best race management available."

The event has grown to include three Paralympic classes of boats and the Sail Newport Blind National Sailing Championship.

"It's a little difficult to find an area in this community that has not benefited from her efforts," Bourbonniere wrote. "She is instrumental in bringing others together to support her causes, making her efforts go further."

Jack Grant, superintendent of Seamen's Church Institute, said McLennan has been a big part of the mission's fund raising efforts. "Her commitment to making a positive difference in the world, whether it is at the Seamen's or through the many other activities she is involved with, is truly inspirational and unpretentious," Grant wrote.

McLennan said it is important to help the people who work on the water front and waterways. "The Seamen's last year served 40,000 people in one fashion or another," she said.

"Judy quietly fights for the underdog," Christie M. Smith, executive director of the Potter League for Animals, wrote in support of McLennan's nomination, "whether that be athletes with disabilities, women or animals."

The daughter of a mining executive father and a mother who competed in sailing and was a regular volunteer, McLennan is divorced and has a son Travis, who lives in Mexico, and a daughter Stephanie who lives in Newport.

"There is nothing more important to me than my family and my friends," McLennan said. To be able to keep friends for many years is a rare experience these days."

McLennan said she plans to keep her full schedule of community projects. Volunteering made her feel comfortable as soon as she made Aquidneck Island her year-round home. "I Love Newport," she said. "This is a wonderful place to live."