

WATT A SIGHT!

Lighted Boat Parade illuminates Newport's Yaquina Bay

By **GRETCHEN AMMERMAN**

For the *TODAY*

Front page photo by Arjen Sundman

This fall US Coast Guard crew aboard the rescue vessel Victory lit up the lives of crew members aboard a stuck commercial fishing boat, stranded 116 miles west off the coast of Newport, when they towed it safely back to harbor. Barring any needs for rescue attempts on Saturday, Dec. 7, this historic 57-foot boat will join the 25th annual Lighted Boat Parade along the historic Newport Bayfront.

"The Victory is the oldest vessel actively serving in the coast guard and leads the parade every year," said event organizer Fran Mathews, owner of Marine Discovery Tours. "It would be unfortunate if they are called to duty during the event, but it would be pretty cool to be rescued by a boat covered in lights, especially if Santa Claus is on board."

The parade takes place from 5 to 6:30 pm, as floating holiday displays depart from various docks along the Bayfront then take a leisurely lap around the bay between the Coast Guard Station and the Embarcadero Resort.

The variety of watercraft each year has included sport fishing boats, research vessels, sailboats, sea kayaks and even surfboards.

"Last-minute entries are always very welcomed," Mathews said "As long as you put some sparkly lights on your vessel, you can be part of the parade."

Though plenty of free viewing opportunities abound, the best are aboard:

"There is free viewing from the piers along the shoreline or in the many restaurants along the Bayfront," Mathews said "Of course, my favorite recommendation is to buy tickets, bundle up and ride on one of the decorated boats; it's so much fun!"

Fran and her husband, the late Captain Don Mathews, started the event in 1994 as a fun way to showcase boats from their harbor, get to know their nautical neighbors and raise funds to help fill needs in the

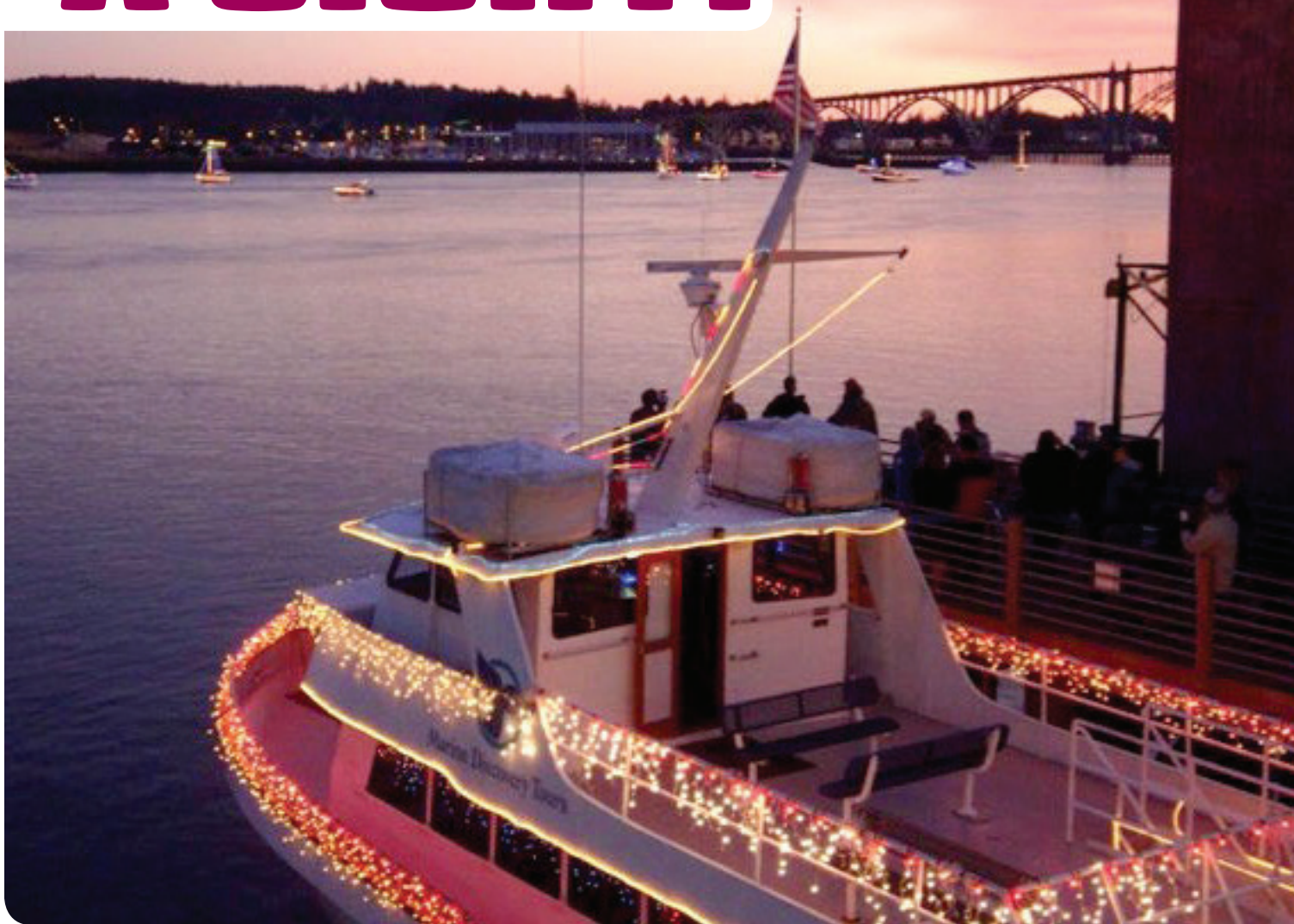
community. They've been enthusiastically joined by the Yaquina Bay Yacht Club, Newport Tradewinds and a variety of boating teams through the years.

"It's a feel-good event for the boating community," Mathews said. "We help raise funds to benefit our Samaritan Pacific Communities Hospital and also help fill the shops and restaurants along the Bayfront during the off season."

To date, Marine Discovery Tours has donated more than \$40,000 raised from boaters' registration fees and guest ticket sales.

This year, the fundraising team has partnered with Thompson's Sanitary Service to support the local CAN Cancer program, which helps cover non-medical living expenses for people fighting all forms of cancer.

Started by owners of a waste disposal



If You Go

The Lighted Boat Parade will start at dusk on Saturday, Dec. 7. For more information about Can Cancer or to make direct donations, contact the Pacific Communities Health District Foundation at kclm@samhealth.org or 541-574-4912.

company in Central Oregon, Can Cancer recognizes the fact that many people who are fighting cancer can rack up large expenses that don't have to do with the actual treatment of the disease and are not covered by health insurance. Funds can be used to help with things like hotel stays and gas costs, which many people on the coast incur as they have to travel to different medical facilities that provide different types

of care.

Marine Discovery Tours and Newport Tradewinds currently have space available for guests at \$35 for adults and \$15 for kids aged four through 13 (children three and under are free). Reservations include cookies and cocoa.

Spaces go fast, so it's a good idea to call 541-265-6200 or visit Marine Discovery Tours at Anchor Pier, 345 SW Bay Blvd., on Newport's Bayfront before 3 pm on Saturday, Dec. 7.

After 25 years, Mathews is still ready for a surprise at the event she co-created.

"There is a rumor of a brand-new stealth holiday boat hopping in that we're all anticipating," she said. "But as always I'm prepared for a variety of decorating themes. Over the years, this has included fireworks, live music aboard boats and even Santa surfing on a decorated surfboard."