

Dear Clearwater friends,

As part of the education team with Clearwater, I've spent so much of the past decade describing what a powerful experience it is for elementary school kids, teenagers, volunteers, and the public to sail aboard the sloop. It is life changing, it really is. But, I have never expressed how much this boat and community has changed me. The majority of my adult life has been spent on the Hudson River hauling on halyards, pulling in seine nets, singing with kids, and asking people to donate to or volunteer with Clearwater.

It's almost impossible to explain to people who have not been crew, what an extraordinary bond is formed between people on our lovely old wooden boat. The people who were crew my first season in the spring of 2009 are still some of my closest friends, and every season since has just added to this extended family of bo'sins and deckhands who dump head buckets, mung bilges, and tune the rig together. This experience is unique to Clearwater, but not unique to my time aboard, the pattern of deep friendship began 50 years ago with the first sailing season in 1969. Some of those crew have remained close even as their physical paths diverged from the sloop, and we are all inexorably bonded together through the years by deckwash. I have learned enormous lessons about responsibility, collaboration, patience, leadership, humanity, stuck fasteners, lifting with your knees, and even love. This boat, this river, this music, this crew, community, family, mission, work, has come to define me.

So, I'm sure our Clearwater community will understand that I am both excited and saddened to announce that I will be casting off from my role Education Director at Clearwater this month and passing the reigns on to someone new. You'll see me up at the Norrie Point Environmental Center teaching with Cornell University and the Hudson River Estuary Program staff. I'm excited to be moving on to another chapter of my life, but will never be far from the brine barrel and my favorite tiller.

To all the Clearwater volunteers, participants, friends, passengers, staff and especially crew. May you all have fair winds, following seas, and well set anchors. I'll see you at Revival!



Fair winds,

Maija Niemisto