Mike Lum Fundraising Event Coordinator Captain Rollo's Kids at Sea Program

Testimony on the importance of Youth Fishing Programs

House Committee on Natural Resources
Subcommittee on Water, Wildlife and Fisheries
January 18th 2024

Chairman Bentz, Ranking Member Huffman and Members of the Committee, on behalf of Friends of Rollo, a California based non-profit organization, I am honored to represent Captain Rollo's Kids at Sea, a coastal youth fishing program in California before the Subcommittee on Water, Wildlife and Fisheries, and speak to my support of H.R. 3925, the Youth Coastal Fishing Program Act. I am Mike Lum, Fundraising Event Coordinator for the organization.

I also manage the southwest region for Morton & Associates, a sales agency representing fishing, marine and outdoor products in the thirteen Western States. In addition, I sit on the Executive Board of the Coastal Conservation Association of California, I am an active member of the American Sportfishing Association and in my spare time, love to go fishing.

California is home to the largest sportfishing fleet and most landings in the nation. Over 200 sportfishing boats, operating year around from dozens of landings from San Diego to the Francisco Bay area. Many of these boats carry up to 75 anglers per trip. We also have the largest and most experienced live bait haulers as our nearshore waters are teeming with baitfish that attract fish and provide ample access to live bait. The California coast drops off rapidly into the Pacific Ocean, creating abundant offshore fishing and whale watching opportunities within a short distance from shore. This is ideal for half-day excursions departing daily. Simply put, California is perfect for youth fishing programs.

Background information about Friends of Rollo, Captain Rollo's Kids at Sea Program

In 1999, in honor of a Captain James "Rollo" Heyn, a popular Sportfishing captain that had just passed away, the 501c3 Non-Profit organization, Friends of Rollo was founded. The goal being to allow as many kids as possible the opportunity to experience their first ocean fishing and marine life awareness trip. With a priority placed on underserved communities, the organization typically charters sixty to one hundred trips per year in addition to a variety of pier and on-land kids fishing events. Each trip carries 30-50 kids. The cost of the boat, fishing tackle, hot lunch and crew are paid by Friends of Rollo. The recent, sky rocketing increases in fuel and trip costs have created a need for additional funding to maintain current trip levels. Demand has never been higher and the need never stronger. The number of trips granted are only limited by the available funds raised. The organization has benefitted over 140,000 kids since it was founded.

Trips are granted to as many groups of children as the budget allows for. Funding is largely grassroots in nature with annual raffles, fishing tournaments, public events and individual donations making up the bulk of the financial resources.

Schools, scouts, boys and girls clubs, church groups, at-risk youth facilities, children's homes, neighborhood youth groups, etc. request trips with a simple online application. The Captain Rollo's Kids at Sea trip coordinator works with each group to arrange a date, select a landing, appropriately sized boat, number of kids, etc. Once the details are worked out, the boat is reserved for them. It is that easy.

The Purpose and Benefits of Youth Trips at Sea

For those of us that spend much of our spare time raising money so that these kid's trips are possible, our investment of time and energy is due to our understanding of the importance. We see, first-hand how the kids react to the experience and how they benefit, both in the short and long term. It is not a matter of **if** we want to spend our weekends selling raffle tickets, soliciting donations, running fishing tournaments, hosting barbeques, etc., we simply must do it, it's not a choice. If not for the Rollo program, who would provide this opportunity to all these kids? What we raise is never enough to meet the demand, but it is sizable and benefits thousands of children each year.

Dr. Chris Minnick, a loyal supporter of the Captain Rollo's Kids at Sea, spent 50 years as a child psychiatrist. He recently shared with me his observations and expertise about the benefits of youth fishing.

Dr. Minnick grew up in a family that had little time for him. When not in school, he spent his early childhood mainly on his own, in what was then, a rural Phoenix, Arizona. He discovered the alure of fishing by watching small fish swimming in the irrigation ditches and canals where he used to play. Fortunately for Chris, his family gardener loved to fish and once he realized Chris was interested, was happy to teach him how to catch them. This passion to go fishing was sparked when he was just 7 or 8 years old. His family relocated to Los Angeles when he was 13 and he lost touch with his fishing mentor. However, he brought his love of fishing and being outdoors with him. It wasn't long before he discovered the Santa Monica Pier and expanded his fishing prowess to saltwater species. Today, Dr. Minnick is 78 years old. His love and respect for nature and the great outdoors have only grown stronger over the years.

He has seen first-hand what introducing children to the joy of fishing and developing an appreciation of our marine resources does to benefit kids. In preparation for this testimony, I asked him to summarize his thoughts about the subject. His letter is included but here is part of what he says.

"As a child psychiatrist I have seen firsthand the importance of introducing children, ideally before the turmoil of puberty and adolescence, to activities that can bring focus, community, and passion to their life. Many children grow up in environments that make them vulnerable to

creating problematic social ties with peers in gangs. They are at risk to bind emotional distress with drugs.

Caring adults who show an interest in these children can have a profoundly positive influence. As happened with me and our gardener, they can be redirected to a focus on something that they would not even know exists without programs like Rollo's Kids, that take kids fishing. Having that introduction involve caring adult figures is a profoundly important element in the success of such activities.

I am now 78 years old. I was on various fishing adventures 123 days last year. My wife is grandmothering with a similar passion. My grandkids are already involved with fishing and I hope it can give them even a tenth of the happiness and meaning it has provided to my life."

I am a prime example of Dr. Minnick's analysis of the life-changing potential that being introduced to the outdoors at a young age can have. No one can appreciate or attest to the importance of this organization more than me. My father died when I was 8 years old. With no siblings and no family support, my mother had to go to work to provide for us. I was left on my own much of the time and it didn't take long before a young boy without much supervision was heading down the wrong path. As good fate would have it, just before my 10th birthday, a family moved into the house across the street and the young father, freshly out of the Navy, was a fisherman that loved to be on the ocean. His two sons were infants, so he was glad to have someone to teach about the ocean and fishing. He had also lost his dad when he was young and that created a special bond that exists to this day. He took me offshore on local fishing boats and showed me how everything was done. I loved it. I remember the first trip very vividly. I was so taken by the experience, the thought of getting into trouble or not doing good in school wasn't an option. It was made clear that the fishing trips would stop if I didn't behave. Going fishing and being on or near the ocean was the most important thing in my life. As a direct result of that experience, my life has been spent being a passionate angler and never working outside of the fishing, boating, outdoor industry. Being on the ocean is still very important to me and I still enjoy watching the dolphin playing alongside the boat. I assure you; it was that first day on a fishing boat that changed my life and provided me a career and a lifetime of enjoyment.

Another example of a professional that recognizes the importance of taking kids fishing is public school teacher, Mr. Chris Stanley. A teacher in the San Diego area, he has taken his 5th grade class on Captain Rollo's Kids at Sea trips for 17 consecutive years. This annual trip became so well known that children in lower grades would be looking forward to it for years before entering 5th grade. They couldn't wait to go fishing. However, not all the kids in the class got to go. Good grades and proper behavior were required throughout the school year to be eligible for the trip. Mr. Stanley's Captain Rollo Kids at Sea trips become so successful that teachers from other schools began requesting trips for their classes. Where else could an opportunity like this exist? Mr. Stanley is now teaching in a community day school where students require additional emotional support and positive outlets. Of course, he continues to utilize trips from Captain Rollo Kids at Sea Program. I have included his letter that explains his positive experiences with his classes and the kids being on the ocean. Mr. Stanley is an exceptional human being that dedicates his life to his students. When not teaching or working with

troubled youths, he is often fishing. He and his entire family work at the numerous Captain Rollo fundraising events each year to help raise the money necessary to continue helping the kids.

Mr. Doug Brown with the Kappa Alpha PSI Men's Group is granted multiple trips each year by Friends of Rollo. These young people attend schools such as Crenshaw High School, Dorsey High School, Audubon Middle School, Washington Prep High School, Boys Academic Leadership Academy, Culver City Middle School, Morningside High School, Inglewood High School and John Burrows Middle School. These are inner city kids that benefit from the Captain Rollo Kids at Sea program year after year. His letter is attached.

Marcus Farrow with Menformation Project, a youth mentoring program in Los Angeles knows what these trips accomplish. We have granted a fishing trip each year for them over the last 4 years. These young people would not get this experience without Friends of Rollo. Menformation Project's mission is to the point... To help our boys succeed in school and stay out of jail!

Facilities that care for children that have lost their parents due to cartel and drug related violence have also been granted Rollo, Kids at Sea trips. Any group that has kids in need are encouraged to apply.

The benefits of exposing young people the experience of being on a boat at sea cannot be overstated. Seeing starfish, mussels, and crabs on the rocks within the marina, the sea lions, dolphin, whales and variety of birds hunting for their next meal are things most have never seen. It all combines with the smells, ocean mist and movement of the boat as the crew makes everything work properly. Children are captivated watching the live sardines and anchovy in the bait tank, learning how to use a rod and reel and catching their first fish. These trips can be life changing for many and create lifelong memories for all. There are adults working careers in the sportfishing industry today that were introduced to the ocean on a Rollo trip. Others have grown up and become marine biologist and involved in research and ocean policy management. They are passionate about protecting our marine resources and others will be taking their own kids fishing someday.

Never Actually Seen the Ocean

Most of the kids served by these trips live within 40 miles of the coast yet it is regularly reported that many of them have never seen the ocean in person before being invited on a Captain Rollo's trip.

Giving children a hands-on introduction to the ocean cannot be replicated with books or videos. The excitement of seeing dolphin playing and swimming near the boat is not something that can be described. The thrill of watching a pelican or cormorant dive into the sea from high above and come up with a meal cannot be explained. The ocean is vast and full of mystery. Many children given the opportunity to be on a boat for the first time, gain an understanding and natural curiosity that stays with them forever.

No Access to the Ocean

Most of our world is covered by water. Except for those that own a boat, or have the resources to pay for a trip, there is no access to the ocean. Most adults in our country have never been on a boat offshore. The chances of children at any age experiencing the adventure is extremely limited. We make it happen.

The Stage is Set

California offers a unique opportunity with the number of sportfishing and whale watching boats, landings and with fish and marine life so close to shore. We would like to provide many more children the opportunity this program offers. The system works well and requires no additional cost, staff or time to ramp up. We can double, triple or quadruple the number of trips without changing anything. 100% of additional funding will be used to increase the number of kids benefitting.

I want to thank Reps. Salazar and Kamlager-Dove for authoring the Youth Coastal Fishing Program Act. I also want to thank Members of this Subcommittee for cosponsoring the bill, including Reps. Huffman, Wittman, Peltola, Levin, Case and Dingell.

The bill would create a \$2 million grant program within the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) for projects that take children fishing in the ocean or Great Lakes, with priority given to projects that serve underserved communities. While similar grant programs exist within other federal land management agencies — such as the National Park Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and U.S. Forest Service- NOAA has no such program. This bill would bring NOAA in line with other federal management agencies and ensure that equal access to nature can be enjoyed by all children. For the numerous programs around the country like ours where increased funding provides proportional increases in the number of children we can take on trips, this bill will directly benefit youth across the nation's coasts. A relatively small amount of federal funding, matched many times over by private sources, will create meaningful and lasting benefits to our nation's youth.

In addition to its over 30 cosponsors, the Youth Coastal Fishing Program Act is supported by dozens of recreational fishing, conservation, and environmental education organizations. I urge the Committee to swiftly pass this bill and help ensure its enactment this session on Congress.

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to share how the Captain Rollo's Kids at Sea program is improving the lives of thousands of children but many more are waiting.

Over 140,000 kids have gone fishing!

Captain Rollo's Kids at Sea organizes marine awareness fishing trips for children who might not otherwise have such an opportunity to witness the beauty and splendor of being on the ocean. Youth are provided with a hands on learning experience and taught about the importance of California's precious marine resources and ecosystems that exist in our coastal waters.



The marine awareness fishing trips consist of 25-50 kids with up to six chaperones on $\frac{1}{2}$ day trips. Rods, reels and tackle are provided as well as a lunch. Kids are instructed in fishing techniques and learn about marine conservation with expert instruction from the Captain and crew on a Coast Guard approved vessel.

We serve all social economic backgrounds including disadvantaged, physically challenged and at risk youth.





waters, bait their hooks and reel in a fish with classroom lesson.





CAPTAIN ROLLO.

Our Annual Raffle

This annual event is a great way to support Captain Rollo's marine education program. For information regarding tickets please visit our web site at CaptainRollos.org

To Request A Trip:

Interested parties can request a trip booking by visiting captainrollos.org.

Under the trips section you can fill out the trip request form or simply contact Howard Coolidge at howard@rollokids.org

Help us take more kids fishing!

The Captain Rollo marine awareness fishing trip program is funded through charitable contributions, grants, year – round fund raising events, legacy donations, product donations and auto pay monthly recurring donations.

Our exciting fundraising events are posted on the Friends of Rollo Facebook page and at CaptainRollos.org. There are many ways to support our

Clubs and other Organizations help us each year by selling raffle tickets and holding their own fundraising events on our behalf. We have plenty of ways to work with your group. Please contact us.

Donate Fishing Tackle

Throughout the year we collect used tackle. Your gift donations are tax deductible and help us raise money to get more kids out on trips.

Families often contact us to arrange a donation after a loved one has passed. We greatly appreciate these generous heartfelt gifts as it passes a love of the ocean and fishing from one generation to kids experiencing it for the

For drop off locations or to arrange pick up, please visit www.CaptainRollos.org.

Monthly Recurring Donations

An easy monthly auto-pay is a convenient and affordable way to support the kids. Credit and debit cards accepted as well as PayPal.

Just \$10 per month adds 3 more kids to the program. \$25 dollars per month will sponsor 10 kids a year. You can start and stop payments anytime. No obligation whatsoever.

Sponsorship Opportunities

Sponsorship opportunities
Sponsorships are available and can be tailored to fit your
private or company request. 100% of the sponsorships go
to funding more excursions at no cost for the kids.

Captain Rollo's/Friends of Rollo is a 501c3 non-profit organization. Your donations are tax deductible. Tax ID number 45-5624805







WE TAKE KIDS FISHING

CONTACT US



2580 Ingraham Street, San Diego, CA 92109 Tim@rollokids.org (858) 350-5870 CaptainRollos.org



June 7, 2023

The Honorable Maria Elvira Salazar U.S. House of Representatives 1616 Longworth House Office Building Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Sydney Kamlager-Dove U.S. House of Representatives 1419 Longworth House Office Building Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representatives Salazar and Kamlager-Dove,

Thank you for your leadership in introducing the Youth Coastal Fishing Program Act of 2023. This bill will provide opportunities for youth to experience their local marine or Great Lakes environment, promoting natural resource stewardship and participation in outdoor recreation. 88% of current fishing participants fished before the age of 12, highlighting the importance of being exposed to fishing at a young age. Not only does spending time outdoors fishing provide health benefits, but research has shown that participants in outdoor recreation place higher importance on environmental values and stand as stronger conservation stewards. This is clearly the case with recreational anglers, who collectively contribute \$1.7 billion annually to conservation through license fees, excise taxes and direct donations.

Access to nature can be a challenge, particularly for Black, Indigenous and people of color (BIPOC) communities; individuals with access and functional needs; and those adversely affected by poverty. Some of these barriers include a lack of connection to nature and feelings of "otherness" in the outdoors. Early introduction to outdoor recreation in a safe, accessible and inclusive space is needed to grow participation and environmental stewardship.

While other federal land management agencies have dedicated programs to connect the public to nature, there is no such recreation program within the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), which manages federal marine fisheries. The Youth Coastal Fishing Program Act fills this gap in NOAA programming, ensuring that youth get the opportunity to connect with their local marine or Great Lakes environment.

We are grateful for your commitment to improving the lives of America's youth by increasing recreational fishing opportunities through the Youth Coastal Fishing Program Act. We are ready to assist you as you work toward the passage of this important legislation.

Sincerely.

American Sportfishing Association Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies Backcountry Hunters & Anglers BoatU.S. Bonefish & Tarpon Trust Center for Sportfishing Policy Chesapeake Bay Foundation Chesapeake Conservancy Coastal Conservation Association Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation Ebony Anglers Guy Harvey Foundation Hispanic Access Foundation **Hunters of Color** International Game Fish Association Izaak Walton League of America Marine Retailers Association of the Americas National Fishing in Schools Program National Marine Manufacturers Association National Wildlife Federation Outdoor Afro Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership Wild Oceans Youth Environmental Alliance

Hi Mike.

As you know I was a child psychiatrist for nearly 50 years and a passionate outdoorsman with a huge focus on fishing. I wanted to share a few thoughts on the importance of fishing in my upbringing, and by extension, on children in general.

I grew up in a household with a physician father and nurse mother who were focused on my dad's practice at a level that left no room for involvement with me. I grew up in rural Phoenix and I spent most of my early childhood on my own playing around irrigation ditches, canals, and fields. I saw small fish regularly and tried to catch them with limited success

Fortuitously, when I was 7 or 8 years old, our Japanese gardner saw my plight and invited me to go lake fishing with him. I still fondly remember standing at the front of my house in the dark at 5 or 6 AM, paper bag breakfast and lunch in hand (made the night before), waiting to be picked up. Sadly, I actually felt closer to him than my father.

When I was 13, we moved to Los Angeles to my great sense of loss. I quickly discovered Santa Monica Pier and would have my mom drop me off in the early moming and pick me up at dark. I was essentially a very unhappy child, very lonely, but was able to make a life and family for myself centered on the pier and fishing.

Fishing has been my passion ever since those days. It provided a purpose and focus in my adolescent years when so many around me started to get in trouble. To this day, virtually all of my friends are outdoorsmen and fishermen.

As a child psychiatrist I have seen firsthand the importance of introducing children, ideally before the turmoil of puberty and adolescence, to activities that can bring focus, community, and passion to their life. Many children grow up in environments that make them vulnerable to creating problematic social ties with peers in gangs. They are at risk to bind emotional distress with drugs.

Caring adults who show an interest in these children can have a profoundly positive influence. As happened with me and our gardner, they can be redirected to a focus on something that they would not even know exists without programs like Rollo's Kids, that take kids fishing. Having that introduction involve caring adult figures is a profoundly important element in the success of such activities.

I am now 78 years old. I was on various fishing adventures 123 days last year. My wife is grandmothering with a similar passion. My grandkids are already involved with fishing and I hope it can give them even a tenth of the happiness and meaning it has provided to my life.

Sincerely, Chris L. Minnick. MD



Santee School District

SCHOOLS Cajon Park Carlton Hills Carlton Oaks Chet F. Harritt STEAM Hill Creek Pepper Dr

PRIDE Academy at Prospect Avenue

Rio Seco Sycamore Canyon Alternative Success Program

January 9, 2024

Captain Rollo's Kids at Sea Fishing Program

As an educator with 29 years of experience, I have witnessed the profound impact of both classroom learning and outdoor experiences, particularly through organizing students' first ocean fishing and marine life awareness trips. Having personally endured a school shooting in 1979, I understand the significance of providing diverse opportunities for students both inside and outside the traditional learning environment. These experiences not only complement academic learning but also serve as crucial outlets for cultivating a healthy mindset. Personally, I have found solace in marine activities and the outdoors as a means to disconnect from trauma and re-engage in a positive mindset.

I am currently teaching in a community day school where students require additional emotional support and positive outlets. I have observed the transformative power of programs like Captain Rollo's Kids at Sea. Many students in this setting lack exposure to the ocean and marine life, and through Rollo's program, the program provides them with their first ocean fishing and marine life awareness trip. The impact extends beyond the immediate learning environment, fostering inspiration and connections that transcend traditional classroom boundaries. Former students frequently return to support others on these adventures or contribute to classroom learning, demonstrating the enduring positive effects of such out-of-classroom experiences.

In my role, I have seen the profound impact of Captain Rollo's program on struggling students, providing them with positive outlets and opportunities to build positive relationships. The program, which also extends its support to other schools, uniquely aligns with setting students up for goal-oriented successes. Students who achieve academic or citizenship goals are rewarded with the opportunity to participate in this program, contributing to their overall success. The tangible improvements in students' achievements underscore the significance of the support and opportunities provided by Captain Rollo's Kids at Sea Program. I am deeply grateful for the positive changes it has brought to the lives of the students I work with and their communities.

Sincerely,

Chris Stanley Santee Teacher

BOARD OF EDUCATION · Dustin Burns, Dianne El-Hajj, Ken Fox, Elana Levens-Craig, Barbara Ryan DISTRICT SUPERINTENDENT · Kristin Baranski, Ed.D.

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Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc.

Long Beach Inglewood South Bay ALUMNI CHAPTER P.O. BOX 587 INGLEWOOD, CA 90309

Training for Leadership Since 1911

January 9, 2024

Howard Coolidge Friends of Rollo 2580 Ingraham St. San Diego, CA. 92109

Dear Howard,

On behalf of the Krimson and Kream Foundation and the Long Beach South Bay Alumni Chapter of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity Inc., we would like to thank "Friends of Rollo" for their years of service to our youth fishing program. Your continued support since 2016 has provided an opportunity for over 30 youth each outing to have a fishing experience. The 2 trips per year have served youth from the cities of Compton, Los Angeles, Inglewood, and Long Beach. That is over 360 youth since we started. (No trips in 2019 or 2020 due to COVID-19)

The primary goal of our program is to expose our participants to a variety of learning experiences. Most of our participants are youth of color, from single parent homes and attend schools that are 100% free or reduce lunch. We emphasize these points to show that without your support these students may never have had an opportunity to have this experience. The secondary goal is to celebrate students who have improved both their academic and social/emotional growth. Our students not only enjoy the experience of fishing, but they enjoy getting away from the day-to-day grind of inner-city life. The event provides awareness of alternative recreational opportunities for our youth. Because of the chaperones (Classroom Teachers) we use, it increases student engagement, academic achievement, and social development by providing teachers opportunities to build relationships outside the classroom. Other development impact on our participants include:

- Acquire knowledge and participate in activities that support and develop new ideas and inventions that shape future endeavors and make a difference within a global community
- The activity will provide an extracurricular activity that requires participants to multi-task.
- Apply problem solving skills and logical thinking to make informed decisions.
- They will learn about sea life, and why certain breeds have size and quantity limits.

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Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc.

Long Beach Inglewood South Bay ALUMNI CHAPTER P.O. BOX 587 INGLEWOOD, CA 90309 Training for Leadership Since 1911

- Communicate effectively to convey and receive information in written, oral, and technical situations with people from diverse backgrounds.
- They will learn how man have an impact on global ecology Engage in opportunities to explore post-secondary educational and career pursuits.

In closing, we look forward to continuing our collaboration with *Friends of Rollo* in our efforts to provide fishing opportunities for our youth.

Sincerely,

Douglas C. Brown, Sr.

Douglas C. Brown, Sr. M.Ed. Guide Right Committee Member Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity Inc. Long Beach Inglewood South Bay Alumni 310-780-8507 dcb7695@gmail.com

...ONE KAPPA...



"It is easier to raise strong boys... than to repair broken men."

January 13, 2024

RE: CAPTAIN ROLLO'S KIDS AT SEA

THE MENFORMATION PROJECT, INC. is a community-based nonprofit organization providing group mentoring & academic coaching for boys of color (ages 8 to 17 years). Since 2009, we have mentored hundreds of boys in Los Angeles County.

Our mission is to help our boys succeed in school & stay out of jail !!!

One relationship building activity we offer is our annual ocean fishing trip, made possible by Captain Rollo's Kids at Sea. Parents could not afford the costly expense of a half-day boat trip full of boys and mentors.

We have numerous stories of inner-city boys who have never been on a boat in the ocean seeing the shore for the first time in wonderment.

It is a lifetime memory when a boy catches his first fish, and we take photos:





RE: CAPTAIN ROLLO'S KIDS AT SEA

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We have taken fishing trips since 2011 when we were introduced to Howard @ Captain Roll's Kids at Sea, formerly know as Friends of Rollo. James "Rollo" Heyn must have been a remarkable force for good, because his friends continue the work in his name.

The team of mentors @ MENFORMATION are grateful for the way Captain Roll's Kids at Sea makes it possible for us to give our boys a fun filled day, including lunch, on the boat. These are memories that creates a bond which can last a lifetime.

Any funds you invest in Captain Roll's Kids at Sea, will produce a priceless return of positively changing the trajectory of a boy's life.

We highly recommend that you make that commitment.

Gratefully,

Marcus Bruce Farrow Co-Founder & Chairman