

MEMBER PROFILE: YACHT-MATE PRODUCTS

"The Professional Captain's Choice"

In an industry where success requires attributes that range from technical skills to personality, and personal characteristics like confidence, trustworthiness and commitment to excellence, Sandy Hoekstra and Yacht-Mate Products are names well-known in South Florida's recreational marine industry, particularly in the water softener, filtration and treatment business, and are synonymous with those attributes. She has been in the business for more than 15 years working first for Aqua Care with a clientele of national restaurant chains, then advancing to Cuno, Inc. as regional manager before starting Yacht-Mate in 1999.

It was after seeing what was available on the marine market for water treatment that Sandy decided to venture out on her own. She had a vision for the great possibilities and to start, she offered a full line of water treatment services and equipment to the marine market that had been traditionally available only to the residential and commercial markets. Sandy says, "I recognized that most of the water treatment systems sold to the marine industry were water makers and PVC type water softeners, which boat owners and captains were not really satisfied with." She notes, "At that time, many boat and yacht owners did not even want to drink the water on the vessels because of their concerns about water quality issues. Based on my experience and knowledge, I knew I could change that and Yacht-Mate was born."

As a native of South Florida who grew up in Pompano Beach, Sandy actually had little or no exposure to the recreational marine industry, nor were her childhood



Sandy Hoekstra and her dog Gracie

dreams indicative of her success today as an entrepreneur and businesswoman. From an early age, it was clear to everyone who knew Sandy that she was certainly not shy, she was strong-willed and determined, and those qualities are largely why she is as successful as she is today. "I truly love life and enjoy the marine industry lifestyle, but I'm also a no-nonsense person and I ensure that Yacht-Mate offers and delivers quality products and great service. The business is built on good referrals and references because everyone we do business with knows that we focus on our customers' needs."

A member of the Marine Industries Association of South Florida since the company started in 1999, Yacht-Mate Products offers to its clients a full range of Water Softeners, UV Sterilizers, Drinking Systems, and Ozone products for a complete quality water management program to ensure water is fresh and safe. Yacht-Mate Products has always been eco-friendly, offering its Going Green program (formerly the Total Quality Water Management Program) since it started. Full details on Going Green with Yacht-Mate can be found on the website www.yachtmate.com

Yacht-Mate also offers to the MIA SF tremendous support for its programs, events and initiatives. "I joined MIA SF for the

networking opportunities and so I can know what's happening in the industry," Sandy says. "Staying involved and having participated in the Annual Golf Tournament, Plywood Regatta, Annual Networking Event, Member Meetings, and even the Captain's Club several years ago, I can safely say my Association membership is important to my business plan." Sandy Hoekstra is the Chair of the MIA SF Golf Committee, a Judge at Plywood Regatta, a long-time volunteer at the Fort Lauderdale Billfish Tournament and is now a member of the Billfish Tournament Steering Committee. Yacht-Mate Products is also a regular exhibitor at the Fort Lauderdale International Boat Show.

Sandy sees Yacht-Mate Products continuing to grow. A recent business partnership with TexSon Water in Texas, a company that makes water filtration products for residential, commercial and industrial uses, means the company will manufacture the current Yacht-Mate line of products and she is confident this is a step in the right direction towards her vision. She is growing the list of dealers that stock the Yacht-Mate Product line to include Seaworthy Marine Supply, BOW- Boat Owners Warehouse, Thomas Marine, and Hopkins-Carter Marine Supply. And, while a significant segment of her business continues to be in the after-market, she is seeing great prospects for adding to the list of boat builders using Yacht-Mate Products. "Currently, Yacht-Mate Products water and air treatment systems have been installed in new builds for Albemarle Boats, Benetti, Holton Custom Yachts, Lazzara Yachts, Mayda Marine, Alloy Yachts and Westport Yachts," says the successful young entrepreneur.

Sandy says she has managed to keep Yacht-Mate afloat during the tough times and staying in business is a milestone when she thinks of the businesses she has seen come and go. She is proud of her accomplishments and says Yacht-Mate products is looking forward to celebrating its tenth anniversary next year and hopes to be a part of South Florida's marine industry and the Association for many years to come. 

