



Valentine's Day

Day-After **Balloon Roundup**, February 15

Get a boat, a pool net, a boat hook, and pick up some balloons
Take pictures and video and post it on Facebook and Instagram!



GRUNION GAZETTE

January 23, 2020 **15A**

Mylar Balloons Target For Sailing Community Cleanup

By **STEPHANIE STUTZMAN**
STAFF WRITER

Valentine's Day is the perfect holiday for showing off love to a significant other with flowers and gifts.

But the downside of any holiday is trash, especially when extra waste like mylar balloons are tossed into the mix. When released into the air, those balloons have to eventually come back down — and often end up in the ocean.

"We've been pulling balloons out of the water since '98 or '99," Marc Hughston, Santana Sailing owner and sailing instructor, said. "And that's just something you do when you're teaching a sailing class — you see a balloon or some trash and you show them how to sail the boat over in that direction and then pick up the trash."

Although picking up trash is a common part of sailing, Hughston said that he was particularly surprised at just how many mylar balloons were in the water the day after Mother's Day last year.

"We were coming from Catalina and heading into Newport Beach and we just could not believe how many balloons were just floating around," he said. "And they were all Mother's Day balloons; they just recently made it onto the water."

Hughston said that was the first time he thought about how often holidays can impact the environment, specifically balloon waste.

"It affected me seeing all of those balloons," he said. "When you see them in the grocery store, you don't think too much about it, but when you're seeing them in the water and you're pulling out 12 balloons, you realize how much we are able to negatively impact our oceans very quickly."

Now, he's hoping to bring this to the attention of sailors from up and down the coast, encouraging them to head out on Saturday, Feb. 15, and collect any holiday-themed balloons before they head out further.

"We'll get more done if people act independently and head out on their own," Hughston said. "As

many boats we can get out there, the faster we can collect balloons before they make it even further out there."

He added that he's hoping to get teams of people involved, including yacht clubs and sailing groups to organize their own on-the-water trash pickup. The more space covered, the better.

There's plenty that landlubbers can do to help minimize how

much trash makes its way onto the water, too.

"Stop purchasing helium balloons and pick up your trash," he said. "Hopefully this will bring awareness to how serious this is."

Hughston will be heading out to sea at 10 a.m. on Saturday, Feb. 15, and said he welcomes any inquiries for questions or for help organizing the cleanup.

To reach out to him directly, email Marc@santanasailing.com, or go to santanasailing.com.

And for sailors who want to grab something to eat after, Hughston and others will be meeting at Shenanigans Irish Pub at 5 p.m. There will be opportunities for group photos and feedback.

Stephanie Stutzman can be reached at ssutzman@gazettes.com.

Balloon Roundup February 15 Checklist

1. Get a boat
2. Get out and pick up some balloons
3. Post pictures & video on Facebook and Instagram
4. Meet up at Shenanigans in LB 5 PM for results

Santana Sailing will depart Rainbow Harbor in Long Beach at 10:00 AM. To join on our boat, contact Marc Hughston at 949-939-8123, or Marc@SantanaSailing.com.

Or, contact your local Sailing Association, Sailing School, Sailing Charter company, or Yacht Club. Go pick up some balloons, and publicize it!