

Around the island in 10 hours

SWIMMER

Man plans to swim around Jamestown to raise funds for Clean Ocean Access

By Laura Damon

Daily News Staff writer

JAMESTOWN - They were young boys that time they found an excellent crabbing spot in Jamestown and recovered more than crustaceans - they found used syringes.

Ben Tuff wants to help clean up the shoreline and prevent the kind of experience that spoiled

the outing he and his brother had years ago. Tuff, now 38, plans to swim a roughly 22-mile course around Jamestown in August to raise awareness and funds for Clean Ocean Access.

Clean Ocean Access is a nonprofit organization that aims to eliminate marine debris, improve coastal water quality and protect and preserve shoreline access. Tuff met Dave McLaughlin, executive director of Clean Ocean Access, at a Swim to Skim open water swimming event and a partnership formed.

The organization's grassroots effort to clean and maintain the oceans "totally aligned

with my own philosophy," Tuff said in a recent phone interview with The Daily News.

Tuff has lived in a number of towns but calls Jamestown home. He's a boarding school teacher at Rumsey Hall School in Connecticut and splits his time between there and Jamestown.

The triathlete doesn't have an exact course outlined yet for his round-the-island swim (he noted strange currents and small eddies) but he's been training for about two hours a **See SWIMMER, A6**

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day, on average, to prepare for the plunge. Aug. 5 is the slated day, but that week is reserved in case a storm or the like presents too dangerous an obstacle. Tuff's friend will paddle board the course as he swims.

He estimates he'll lose about 32 ounces of water every hour during the swim, so he'll take some time to re-hydrate and re-fuel over the course of the estimated 10-hour swim.

Tuff completed a 12-and-a-half mile swim around Key West, Florida, a year ago, when the water there was about 89 degrees. He anticipates chillier and rougher conditions in Jamestown.

It's a "mind over matter thing," Tuff said. "I always have to have a goal to work for," he said when asked why he chose to undertake such

a daunting challenge.

He's the first to swim around Jamestown to benefit a nonprofit organization like Clean Ocean Access, he said. Tuff hopes that since he's invested in accomplishing such a feat, people will be inspired to invest in Clean Ocean Access. A donations page will soon be live on the Clean Ocean Access website.

But it's more than a fundraiser. Tuff sees the swim as a "really great message to bring home to the [boarding school] students."

And it's sure to send a message to his own children, Wyatt, 12, and Maisie, 10. Tuff's wife, Gretchen, is also an athlete.

Family, inspiration for young people and personal goals are among the things that drive Tuff. But he added that "we got to have clean oceans in order to swim." ldamon@newportri.com



Ben Tuff, 38, estimates he will need to drink 32 ounces of water for every hour of his round Conanicut Island swim to benefit Clean Ocean Access. [PHOTO BY CHRISTOPHER TUFF]