**A** **SENATE RESOLUTION**

TO RECOGNIZE AND HONOR SUSIE WATSON OF HORRY COUNTY FOR HER DEDICATED SERVICE TO THE YACHTS FOR TOTS INTRACOASTAL CHRISTMAS REGATTA AND TO CONGRATULATE HER AS A FOUNDER OF THIS BELOVED ANNUAL EVENT ON THE OCCASION OF ITS THIRTY‑FIFTH ANNIVERSARY.

Whereas, thirty‑five years ago on Thanksgiving weekend, a simple idea came to pass that has evolved into a multifaceted phenomenon blessing the lives of many in Horry County. Susie Watson, Harborgate Marina manager, and her uncle, Captain Poo McLaughlin, both local residents of the Cherry Grove section of North Myrtle Beach, decided that the excitement of the big day of family, feasting, football, and giving thanks began to wane soon after the leftovers of turkey sandwiches and pumpkin pie were gone; and

Whereas, these two boating enthusiasts joined in considering what to do to celebrate the special weekend following Thanksgiving, which marks, after all, the official beginning of the holiday season. They promptly and enthusiastically came up with an idea: Get a few boaters together, spend Friday and Saturday decorating their boats, and then parade them down the Intracoastal Waterway. Thus, the Intracoastal Waterway Christmas Regatta was launched; and

Whereas, Susie and Captain Poo discovered that it was not difficult to find boaters to participate, since most of their contacts shared their passion for anything that floats. Ultimately, the Watson‑McLaughlin brainchild became an ongoing reality, thanks to Susie and her uncle’s own efforts and constant labor by a dedicated committee of volunteers; and

Whereas, this committee, later affectionately dubbed Santa’s Angels, indeed has been the backbone of organizing and planning the now‑annual regatta, and its members work all year to make it happen. Since that first boat parade in the early 1980s, the regatta has developed into an event that drew twenty‑five thousand in one year and helped more than nine hundred families make Christmas morning a happy one. Much of the regatta’s growth can be attributed to Susie Watson’s hard work in the early years. Susie remains a popular spokesperson and indefatigable worker for the event; and

Whereas, aside from the obvious satisfaction of helping children through the regatta’s sponsorship of Yachts for Tots, regatta committee members are fueled by the fact that one hundred percent of the nonprofit’s proceeds are put back into the community. The committee is totally dedicated to making sure there is not a single child in Horry County without a present to open on Christmas morning, as well as to helping throughout the year with such needs as eyeglasses, prescriptions, and clothing; and

Whereas, each year on the Saturday after Thanksgiving, the curtain rises on that spectacular maritime parade known as the Intracoastal Christmas Regatta, which passes various viewing areas along the waterway from Little River to Dock Holiday’s Marina in North Myrtle Beach. The Senate, grateful to Susie Watson for her part as a founder and consistent supporter of the event throughout its history, takes great pleasure in saluting her on the occasion of the regatta’s thirty‑fifth anniversary. Now, therefore,

Be it resolved by the Senate:

That the members of the South Carolina Senate, by this resolution, recognize and honor Susie Watson of Horry County for her dedicated service to the Yachts for Tots Intracoastal Christmas Regatta and congratulate her as a founder of this beloved annual event on the occasion of its thirty‑fifth anniversary.

Be it further resolved that a copy of this resolution be presented to Susie Watson.

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