

## THE NEXT GENERATION ON THE RIVER



**THE HUDSON RIVER:** jewel of Southern New York, namesake of the legendary Henry Hudson, 315 miles of glacier-created natural wonder. And, from my earliest memories, my second home.

My name is DOMENICK FEDELE and I am a sophomore at Yorktown High School. My father, Ron Fedele, has been an owner member at the Cortlandt Yacht Club since 1999. This has afforded me the incredible opportunity to grow up on the Hudson.

I first rode on our jetski and boat with my dad when I was just under a year old and instantly fell in love with being out on the river. For three to four months of the year my family and I spend more time along or on the river than we do at home. While most in the area pay little mind to the river -- it is simply a cool local feature and not much else -- the Hudson has always had a special place in my heart.

I learned to swim in the pool at our yacht club, and was sitting beside my dad as he drove our boat since before I was in preschool. I was allowed to sit on his lap and hold the wheel and soon learned to drive myself. As I grew older, I learned about the tides, winds, and river navigation. I have been taught to wash, fix, and maintain our boat and will be starting a small boat-washing business at our yacht club this summer. I am lucky enough to have a summer birthday and enjoy spending it with my family along the Hudson every year.

Some of my favorite memories on the Hudson are watching 4th of July fireworks over the river from the bow of our boat, an unrivaled vantage point (there have been several years we were so close to the launch barge the bow was covered in ashes) and taking the boat north past Newburgh, where the scenery is truly idyllic in early fall. As my younger brother has gotten older and grown to share in our love for the river we have been able to take longer trips on the boat and are looking forward to being able to take overnight trips this summer.

I am now 16 years old and hold a NYS Boating Safety Certification. I am able to drive our boat almost independently (docking certainly has a learning curve!) and am excited to do the same with the jet ski for the first time after years of rides with my dad. I look forward to following in my father and grandfather's footsteps of boating on the Hudson for as long as we live in the area.

The magic of the Hudson is not found through expensive boat trips or jet ski speed runs, as fun as they may be, however. What makes the river truly special is the community that is built around it. I consider our "dock neighbors" and yacht club members to be my friends despite age gaps often in the decades. Boating and spending time along the river brings people together through a common passion and creates an incredible environment. Some of the most fun nights at the yacht club have been those spent under our tent or on the back of a friend's boat, talking and enjoying the crisp, clear air under the stars.

My upbringing on the Hudson has undoubtedly shaped my perception of the world. I have a great appreciation for nature and prefer being outside to almost anything. I love sitting under the shade of our tent at the CYC and simply watching the river: boats speeding by, ducks in the marina, ripples breaking against the rocky shore. In a world of dizzying speed and incessant technology, the river offers a serene escape, a window into a simpler, more beautiful world.

I have been instilled with patience while waiting for hours to go on the boat or jetski, with a strong work ethic through helping my dad maintain the boat, and a great sense of responsibility when entrusted

to drive our boat. I now work at parties and events at our yacht club and am repeatedly recognized for my hard work and dedication. I truly believe that my experiences every summer on the river have made me a better, more well-rounded person and I am incredibly grateful that I have had these opportunities.

Every year I look forward to the end of school and the chance to spend time down by the river nearly every day for several months. This year is no different -- the boat is already in the water and the jet ski will soon follow. If you are looking for me in the next few months, Cortland Yacht Club should be your first stop.

I am fully aware that most people do not have the privilege I do to spend the summer at a yacht club on the Hudson. However, this is most definitely not a requirement for enjoying the incredible river we have in our own backyards. I would highly recommend trying to spend some time along the river this summer, even if just for a nice dinner at a waterfront restaurant. While it will certainly not change your life, I am confident that everyone can find some happiness in my special place.

