

'Just a Lap'

The Ocean Cruising Club is pleased to support Jenny Decker's "Just a Lap" circumnavigation and has awarded a Challenge Grant towards the costs of the voyage and the purchase of important items of equipment. This grant is the tenth to be made since 2019. A variety of challenging projects have been supported in that time, including unsupported, non-stop, singlehanded circumnavigations and several environmental maritime research projects.

Jenny Decker comments:

I am completely humbled, honored, and unmeasurably grateful to be the Ocean Cruising Club's Challenge Grant recipient. I am currently on a world record attempt, "Just a Lap", as the first solo person to sail around the world with Charcot Marie Tooth disease (CMT) in my sailing vessel Tiama; a 1983 Bristol 35.5C.

<https://www.hawaiinewsnow.com/video/2023/02/16/race-against-her-body-clock-this-hawaii-woman-set-sail-solo-voyage-around-world/>

As a sailor I have almost 10,000 nautical miles throughout the Pacific and Atlantic oceans. Over 4,000 of those miles are solo. On my current vessel I have sailed through the Hawaiian Islands, to Palmyra Atoll, Kiribati, America Samoa, and Fiji. I departed from Kona, Hawaii on my solo circumnavigation on June 28th, 2023, with my first passage of 1,200 miles to Kiribati being the longest passage I have ever done solo. Being awarded this grant just gave my trip a renewed breath of life during an opportune moment. I am currently waiting out the cyclone season in Vuda, Fiji before continuing forward progress in May to Vanuatu, Solomon Islands, Papua New Guinea and into the Indian Ocean.

CMT is a degenerative neurological disorder that affects the peripheral nerves. There is currently no cure, and I am on an internal stopwatch before I lose my physical independence. When leaving on my journey into the South Pacific, my goal was to inspire the world that you can truly do anything you put your mind to. Furthermore, my trip "Just a Lap" is to create awareness for this rare disease in hopes for successful research towards a cure to help those younger than me. As most sailors can attest, solo sailing has a multitude of challenges. Factoring in my physical limitations often requires ingenuity but I have always believed that your mind is stronger than any physical attribute you may possess. I will continue to be a positive role model towards this aspect. As in most adventures, the reasons "why" often transform and evolve along the way. As a 17-year trauma ICU RN it has become very apparent that I am often the only medical professional present throughout remote areas I have sailed. Whether it is local villagers, or fellow cruisers, I have had to respond to multiple medical emergencies during my 3,200 solo nautical miles with no aid or access to further medical supplies. This realization has added a new aspect to my trip as I want to continue to provide medical aid where needed throughout my sailing. I am currently working on stocking my vessel with more medical supplies and an AED to be able to supply lifesaving medical care within the nursing practice act along my journey.

With high hopes, I planned for the circumnavigation to jump the equatorial line avoiding storm seasons due to my unknown physical independence timeline. As most sailors and circumnavigators know, the word PLAN probably should probably not exist in our vocabulary. We are bound by weather, vessel repairs, and just too many contingencies that are out of our control. A prolonged refit on my vessel led to a late start on the southern hemisphere season, an El Nino year produced an early named storm in

October, I rode out another category 3 named storm aboard in early November pushing me to make a tough decision. For the safety of myself and my vessel, I ultimately decided to stay put for cyclone season and arranged for Tiama to have a spot in the safest cyclone berth in Vuda, Fiji. In May I will continue forward progress through the western part of the South Pacific and into the Indian Ocean. The OCC challenge grant is helping me not only with this safe berthing but providing funding to tackle evolving goals and needed equipment. I am now stocking up my vessel with new medical supplies, hauling out to apply a few coats of bottom paint, installing a winch modification specific for my physical limitations, and volunteering towards humanitarian efforts. It is imperative I make the most of my time during cyclone season and thus far it has given me the opportunity to do motivational speaking to our youth in schools/universities, work as a nurse, prepare for future countries, and obtain needed parts allowing me to make modifications to my vessel that have become apparent thus far. Furthermore, allowing time to join fellow cruisers in hopes of being part of volunteer response teams, such as Sea Mercy Fiji, to aid remote island communities after natural disasters in our private vessels.

It is hard to express in words how grateful I am to the OCC for helping a fellow sailor along the way and believing in my journey. I am extremely proud to be a member of such an incredible organization and truly look forward to taking the OCC around the world with me. "Just a Lap" may be followed on Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok as well as ways to support the endeavor on these social media outlets.

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/justalap/>

Instagram: https://www.instagram.com/just_a_lap/

TikTok: <https://www.tiktok.com/@justalap>

With all my gratitude and determination,

Jenny Decker

The OCC Challenge Grant scheme has two categories: the Adventure Challenge Grant and the Conservation Challenge Grant. Prior membership of the OCC is not required in order to apply. If you, or someone known to you is planning a particularly ambitious sail-exploration or is planning a similarly ambitious maritime conservation or environmental project, consider applying for an OCC Challenge Grant. Further details including eligibility criteria and how to apply are available on the OCC website.
