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Around Alone champion, wife to boost tall ship effort

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The skeleton of a tall ship that's been sitting in a field in downtown Charleston will get its skin as soon as a new pair of high-profile supporters raises more money.

The Spirit of South Carolina's timber frame was finished last summer, and construction has been on hold since then. The ship, which is built from the plans for a 19th-century schooner, is in Ansonborough Field near the South Carolina Aquarium.

This week, the S.C. Maritime Her-

itage Foundation hired two new co-directors to raise the money to finish the project. They are Around Alone champion Brad Van Liew and his wife, maritime public relations professional Meaghan Van Liew.

They need to raise \$4 million to finish construction, but the siding will be put on as soon as \$500,000 is donated, Meaghan Van Liew said. The ship will be finished in phases as more money comes in.

"It's a big job, but we're excited about it," she said. "We would like to have it in the water next spring."

Another \$2 million will be needed

for maintenance and educational programs. The foundation wants to make the ship a sailing classroom to teach youth navigation and leadership.

"We devote ourselves to projects we believe in," Brad Van Liew said. "The Spirit of South Carolina will bring the intoxicating world of the sea to millions of South Carolina youths. ... The ship will be more than an educational tool but a vehicle to build character and leadership qualities in our children."

The Van Liewes were hired after a donation from Charleston resi-

dents Pierre Manigault, Teddy Turner and Hank Hofford coordinated a statewide fund-raising effort. Project founder Charlie Sneed will continue as co-director of the foundation.

A documentary about building the ship and the state's maritime history will be made for South Carolina schools.

Charleston's School of the Building Arts will use the project to teach traditional ship-building methods. Tours are held at the shipyard on Tuesdays and Saturdays. For more information, call 856-9974.