

Community Boating Center



by Vicki
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The southern coastal region of Massachusetts offers some of the finest sailing waters on the East Coast. Whether competing in 50-foot-plus racing yachts from Newport, Rhode Island to Bermuda every other June or maneuvering single-handed Optimist dinghies around inflatable buoys, sailing on the South Coast impresses many.

Once the sport of the more privileged, learning to sail is now within the reach of children and adults thanks to a group of passionate sailors determined to bring their sport to the masses. With pride and dedication, the team at the Community Boating Center in Clarks Cove, New Bedford, understands that sailing offers more than just a fun ride. It is a sport that teaches courage, endurance, team work and mental alertness...skills critical for success in life.

The beginnings of the Community Boating Center, or "CBC" as it is affectionately known, date back to the mid- '90s when area social worker JoAnn Clarke recognized that many area children had little to do in the summer. With her interest in sailing, the concept of using the sport to help kids was born.

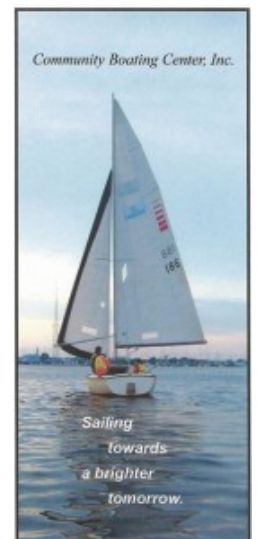


The growth of the CBC and its programs has been remarkable for a primarily volunteer based organization. In 1998, the program incorporated as a 501(c) (3) public charity "dedicated to enriching the lives of area youth by exposing them to a new and challenging environment built upon a

foundation of trust and respect.” The coastal setting of New Bedford made it the perfect location for area youth to expand their lives from the streets and tenements to the waters of their neighborhoods. The program’s focus on safety, fun and education transforms the daily lives of many well beyond the summer.

Simply put, the Community Boating Center uses sailing to teach life skills to local kids. Kids who may not learn about trust, respect, good judgment and teamwork in their personal lives for a myriad of reasons can acquire these skills while holding a tiller and a mainsheet.

Sailing requires attention to detail, physical strength, cooperation and respect of the marine environment. There is no room for disrespect and bad choices. In combination, kids come to CBC to learn to sail while having fun and learning some powerful lessons about life.



Sarah Hitchcock of Dartmouth previously worked with the CBC programs. Her experience and skill goes beyond the boats she so handily maneuvers with the kids. “We are mentors to the kids and positive role models so it isn’t just about sailing” Hitchcock, a former Tabor Academy and University of Hawaii sailor explains.

The sailing programs at CBC have grown immensely over the past years, indicating just how popular and beneficial the organization is. Sailing instruction designed to meet the needs of children from age five through adulthood is offered in numerous types of boats. “We sail all types of boats to match the different programs. Sonars, a 23-foot stable and

roomy boat is perfect for adults. Vanguard 420s are quick and responsive and the intermediate and advanced kids love them," Hitchcock explains.

The fleet also includes eleven Catalina Capris, a 14 foot sloop perfect for honing the skills of introductory sailing and four Laser Picos for more advanced learning.

The ever popular Optimist sailing dinghy designed for sailors weighing between 50-120 pounds. It has become the world standard for introductory junior trainers. In an Opti, learning the skills of sail handling and boat maneuvering serves as a foundation for sailing all other boats.



An example of a boat used to teach sailing.

In addition to instructional programs, CBC offers Monday night racing in the Club 420s and Sonar classes. Sailors can sign up for a series for \$50 or on a per race basis for \$20.

Filling a huge need in the area, sailing at CBC has become an intramural sport for UMass-Dartmouth students as well as offering after school sailing for kids in the seventh through twelfth grades.

"High school sailing represents the fastest growing segment of sailing in the United States," Hitchcock says explaining that students from Nativity Prep have been coming to CBC for quite some time.

The future of the Community Boating Center is bright. An artistic rendition of the Master Plan proudly hangs on the wall of the Clarks Cove facility. Supported through program fees, grants and the spirit of volunteerism, CBC's annual fundraiser takes place each May to kick off the sailing season. The event, known as the "Opening of the Bay" raises scholarship money for inner city kids wanting to benefit from their many programs. The well attended and exciting event is synonymous with the unofficial start of the boating season and is embraced by many area sailors and CBC supporters.

The Community Boating Center will no doubt take numerous tacks as it continues to grow and flourish into the future but the way in which it empowers kids will always be at its core. To learn more about the programs and to support the wonderful work being done, visit www.communityboating.org . This organization proves that together we can improve the world even if it's one little boat at a time.