

Local Spotlight: New Bedford Community Rowing

Head of the the organization:

Carolyn McGonagle – Director



How long has New Bedford Community Rowing been around?

We began putting people on the water in June, 2010.

What led to the formation of New Bedford Community Rowing?

What is your purpose of this organization?

We became an organization through the hard work of Mayor Scott Lang and Matthew Morrissey, executive director for the New Bedford Economic Development Council. As part of an initiative to develop the waterfront, they decided that having a community-based rowing program would bring the people of New Bedford back to the water for recreational purposes. It has thus far been extremely successful, with over 100 participants in just the first summer.

Our purpose is to bring rowing – a historically inaccessible sport to many – to any and everyone in the Greater New Bedford community. We aim to keep costs as low as possible, and scholarships are available for any youth. We want people to enjoy the outdoors and form new friendships, and we want the kids to focus on staying in school and going on to college. We invite all types of people, including non-athletes, to give rowing a try. It really is a sport for anyone, at any age.



Is this program part of a larger organization, or does it operate on its own?

Community Rowing Inc. (CRI), based in Brighton, was brought in by Mayor Lang and Matthew Morrissey to be the managing partner of this program due to their extensive expertise in all areas of rowing, from learn-to-row classes, to competitive racing teams, to corporate team building events. They also run adaptive and veteran programs.

What is your favorite part about this organization?

I love seeing the kids as they bond with each other and with their coaches, and I love how they find pride in what they're doing. Kids from rival schools or different social circles become close friends by breaking down barriers that shouldn't be there to begin with – and they're doing it themselves. Seeing them have fun and succeed is the most rewarding part of it all. They are all amazing!

How would you describe the effectiveness of the program so far?

With not even a full year under our belt, there is much more progress to be made. However, I would describe our effectiveness as very high. Several kids plan to row in college, and some have already been accepted. Furthermore, there are one or two that may gain scholarships to attend top level schools, and one participant even has a chance to make the US Rowing Junior Development Team. I'd say for a bunch of novice rowers, that's pretty incredible...and we've only just begun.

What is the meaning behind your organization's name?

It stems from our parent company, Community Rowing Inc., largely because we share similar missions – to make rowing available to all. We're focused on the community and how we can be a part of it in a healthy way.



What sets you apart from other, similar organizations?

Most sport teams teach their athletes the individual skills needed to perform in that sport, along with how to win. With the New Bedford Community Rowing, we teach more than just rowing. We incorporate life skills and place a high importance on school and planning for the future. We provide free tutoring for kids that need it. We focus on having all athletes, young and old, work together as a team, and how to support each other outside of practice. We also teach that, while winning is important and feels great, it is not the only goal. Performance and being proud of what you do, regardless of the outcome, is more important.

What big events do you have coming up?

On the second Tuesday of every month we have a "Trivia Throwdown" at Rose Alley Ale House. We ask for \$10 per person to support the club, but we have prizes for the top three teams of the night. We are also eagerly awaiting the snow and ice to melt so we can get back on the water in April!!



Has your organization gone through any major changes recently?

We have moved locations a few times, each time getting better and better. The latest move will be from Popes Island, where we were for the fall season, to upper Acushnet, at the end of Sawyer

Street, across from the New Market Basket. Our goal is to have

a boathouse built at that location. Popes Island will still be our launching point for our fall Regatta, called the "New Bedford Popes Island Regatta."

If you could do anything for your organization, what would it be?

If I could truly do ANYTHING for my organization, it would be to find the necessary funding to make rowing not just available to all, but free for all. Unfortunately, our sport is very expensive so we do our absolute best to make it as affordable as we can. We've been extremely lucky to have found some strong supporters of our program and they are what make it all possible. I must thank them all from the bottom of my heart for what they've done for New Bedford and it's people.