

Grosse Pointe Yacht Club grows partnership with Challenge the Wind

By Melissa Walsh
Staff Writer

GROSSE POINTE SHORES AND DETROIT — Grosse Pointe Yacht Club Sailing Director Wally Cross believes when kids have accessibility to sailing, they have accessibility to fun.

"If there's an easy, affordable way for kids to sail, they would do it," he said.

Detroit's Challenge the Wind program has been working to provide sailing accessibility to kids more than 20 years, a goal shared by GPYC's Grosse Pointe Youth Nautical Education Foundation since its founding in 2009.

The past few years, a partnership between the two has led a growing number of children in Detroit to discover the joy in sailing.

Harry Jones, who began working with Grayhaven Sail Club's Challenge the Wind Program at Kean's Marina in 2011, said it was 2012 when GPYNEF's Jim Morrow and Ted Everingham asked to discuss the two-week youth sailing program he was running.

"We had a meeting at the Bayview Yacht Club," Jones explained. "And I took them through a 10-year plan. It was a pretty optimistic plan for what we had at that point in time. We just moved to three boats and one other instructor. So we were still pretty small. We had been doing it for a couple years and I guess they had been watching and they said, 'We trust that you guys know what you're doing and we want to help you.'"

Jones said the meeting focused on the common mission of getting young



Challenge the Wind lead instructors Bill Lane, left, and Harry Jones, in "Opti Bay" at the program's new location at Detroit Boat Club.

people, who would not otherwise have the opportunity, involved in the sport of sailing.

To expand its program to more students, CTW required space to grow. With the help of GPYNEF, Jones said, this season CTW moved from Kean's Marina to the Detroit Boat Club on Belle Isle.

"We wouldn't be doing this if it weren't for the foundation," Jones said. "They really embraced us, helped us. I sort of joke with my instructors that we've got a couple of benefactors — Kean's Marina and Grosse Pointe Youth Nautical Education Foundation. But the Grosse Pointe (Youth Nautical Education) Foundation, whenever we have a problem, they're quite willing to step in and help us solve it and part of that was getting here. Kean's was wonderful to us, but we were getting too land-locked."

Jones dubs the calm, secluded waterway in front of Detroit Boat Club "Opti Bay."

"It's enclosed on three sides so it's an extremely safe place to let pre-

teens have at it, figure it out," Jones said, adding the program operates with about 20 boats in the bay, including a safety boat and seven instructors.

"We had them sailing on their own in three days," Jones said. "That just confirmed that this is just such a nice place to do the instruction."

"It's just a nice corner for sailors," said Cross, who expects junior sailors from Grosse Pointe Yacht Club will visit Detroit Boat Club and sail its harbor with CTW junior sailors.

"We provide a lot of the assets," added Cross, "but Harry Jones got Home Depot to provide wood for the dock and we got a group of guys together to help put it together. We also got a company to provide an outboard motor for their safety boat."

In 2018, the GPYNEF donated a \$4,000 grant to CTW, as well as three floating platforms, a Tartan 10 sailboat and four additional Optimist dinghies. The foundation had previously donated four Optimist dinghies in 2017 and two

420 sailboats in 2016.

Foundation volunteers also assisted the CTW team in the logistics of settling into their new location on Belle Isle.

July 18, during the first week of the three-week CTW program, seven advanced CTW junior sailors attended a race clinic taught by Cross at the GPYC clubhouse before heading into the bay in 420s for five races teaming up with GPYC junior sailors.

"First Wally gave them a little chalk talk, how the race starts, the rules of the water," Jones explained. "Then we got them out on the water with the Grosse Pointe Yacht Club junior sailors helping the boat and our kids as crew. We did three races that way, then flipped and did the last two races with the CTW kids steering the boat at the helm."

"We're 100 percent behind Challenge the Wind and what Harry Jones is doing," said Cross. "(The CTW junior sailors) are just sponges. Their eyes are wide open."

Lauren Cochran, 17,



Grosse Pointe Yacht Club Sailing Director Wally Cross gives racing instruction to Challenge the Wind junior sailors prior to teaming with GPYC junior sailors in five races.

from Berkley, who's been sailing with CTW since she was 12, attended the race clinic.

"We had a blast," she said. "We learned some new things, like roll tacking. ... We had a lot of fun up there and I hope to do some more races with them."

Selena Cade, 16, from Pontiac, who's been sailing with CTW since age 13, added, "We got to know some other people and do five races. We got really comfortable with sailing out on the water and racing out on the water. ... It was pretty interesting and a lot of fun to go out and race."

Cochran and Cade are among the advanced

sailors in the CTW program and help Jones and his instruction team with teaching the newer students. They said they enjoyed "the pressure of racing," in that it supports mastering how to sail well.

Jones and Cross said they expect to create more opportunity for the Grosse Pointe and Detroit junior sailors to practice their sailing skills together.

For more information about the Challenge the Wind youth sailing program visit challenge.thewind.org. To get involved with Grosse Pointe Youth Nautical Education Foundation, visit gpynef.org.

The Week Ahead

THURSDAY, AUG. 16

◆ Grosse Pointe Shores movie night, dusk at Osias Park, 800 Lakeshore.

MONDAY, AUG. 20

◆ City of Grosse Pointe Council meeting, 7 p.m. in council chambers, 17147 Maumee.
◆ Grosse Pointe Woods City Council meeting, 7 p.m. at city hall, 20025 Mack Plaza.

TUESDAY, AUG. 21

◆ Grosse Pointe Shores City Council meeting, 7 p.m. at the municipal building, 795 Lakeshore.