

# NEWS

## Sailing to confidence

EYC offers disadvantaged youth chance to learn new skill

By Karen Mackenzie

Once a high brow domain, a local yacht club is introducing sailing to low income kids from across the Greater Toronto Area. Thanks to an Ontario Trillium Foundation subsidy, volunteers, and private, corporate, and government donations, 50 students will have the opportunity to learn to sail at the Etobicoke Yacht Club (EYC) (300 Humber Bay Park Rd. W.).

"We believe in taking kids out of their norm, and allowing them to do something they wouldn't normally be able to do," said Mikay William, recreation coordinator of the Albion Boys and Girls Club (ABGC) (8 Guided Ct.). The ABGC has referred kids to the EYC Junior Sailing Program since the program's inception three years ago, as has the Stonegate Community Health Centre (150 Berry Rd.), and various public schools.

William said most of the kids he refers to the program come from "a multicultural neighbourhood, from low income housing, and a lot of single parents." The students will make up 25 per cent of the 200 youth aged seven to 17 participating in the club's summer program, which begins at the end of June.

"It's an activity that, first of all, gives kids an appreciation of the water and water safety. But it also builds a lot of their self confidence as they're growing up, through their ability to manage the boat in the forces of the wind, and the socialization that occurs through the groups

of kids as they work together," said Gord Hines, member of the EYC Junior Sailing Committee.

The EYC, which encompasses 18 acres on the west side of the Humber Bay at the mouth of Mimico Creek, is made up of approximately 500 members, all of whom dedicate volunteer hours to the club and its programs.

**"We figure every kid has potential, and we want to develop it"**  
**—Mikay William, recreation coordinator, ABGC**

Junior Sailing classes range from the most basic levels, White Sail I, II, and III, to Bronze Sail, up to the Silver Sail Level VI, which is an advanced level for racers. Students are taught on a number of boats, including Optimists, Blue Jays, and International 420s. The Optimist dinghies, a popular boat for student sailors, were built by the EYC members themselves in order to keep the costs of the program down, with funds from the Ontario Trillium Foundation grant.

The club hires five to six university, college, and high school students as instructors each year. James Niclasen, 20, is this year's head instructor, and was previously a student of the program himself.

"During the summer it's the best place to work. It's sunny, it's beauti-

ful, and other junior sailing schools would kill to have the equipment we have to work with here," said Niclasen, who began sailing when he was seven.

Niclasen stressed that there is no differentiation between subsidized and non-subsidized students in the program.

"You definitely see personality changes over the two week period of the classes," said Niclasen. "A lot of kids who were maybe timid start to learn a new skill...I can see some of my students are like when I was younger; really excited."

Hines hopes one day to see some of the previously sponsored students gain a summer job from the program. And although none of the subsidized students have reached the Silver Sail level, the EYC is optimistic that someone one day will.

"We have plans, if a child does aspire to that end in terms of their qualifications and interest, to provide the support around a boat, which other students would normally have to supply themselves, to make that an accessible program for the kids," said Hines.

At least one of the returning ABGC youth will be entering the Bronze Sail Level IV, having previously completed the White Sail programs, reported William. "We just want to give every kid access to diversity. We figure every kid has potential, and we want to develop it."

For more information on the Junior Sailing programs, which run between June 27 and Sept. 2, please see [www.eyc.ca](http://www.eyc.ca).

responsible programs to getting rid of billboards and development in High Park, form a list of the greatest protests the city has seen, it is difficult to single out any one act.



**Noted community activist Don Jennison, passed away at 78-years-old in late April.**

"Don's contribution to the community was more than a specific act or campaign," said Leeson, who has posted a tribute to Jennison on the

World19 website. "A lot of our battles were losing ones or don't have a specific end. They are constant struggles, but Don was an example of someone who kept fighting them."

Gris agreed, saying that while Jennison knew he was the perpetual underdog, it never stopped him from trying to change the system. "Change in a community is inevitable, but Don also knew it needed to be monitored and watched over."

Still, Ingram cautions against lionizing a man who would most likely not want to be remembered as anything more than a good neighbour.

"Don himself never would've wanted to see himself portrayed as an irreplaceable saint," said Ingram, who also wrote Jennison's eulogy. "He recognized you didn't have to walk two feet above water to change things. But if someone steps up to try and fill his shoes, Don would be the first person in their corner, cheering them on."

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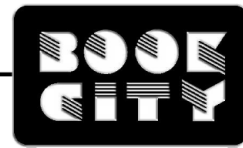
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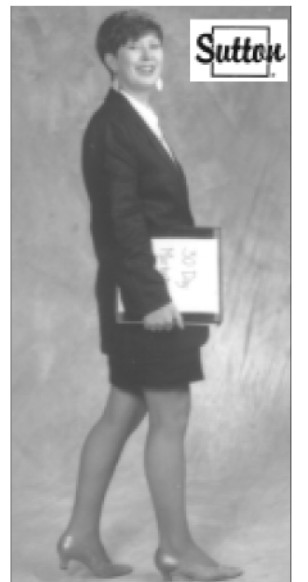
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