

If you're an old salt like me and still remember the sheer joy and excitement of your first few sails you'll fall in love with the kids at City Sail, like I did. I've never experienced such an enthusiastic and dedicated group of young people, thirsty for the experience, knowledge and skills involved in sailing. The New City Kids after school program stresses leadership skills, scholarship and the discipline required to build the leaders of tomorrow. Using the City Sail Program as template to practice these qualities is a natural fit and the kind of thing many middle and upper income parents do with or for their own kids. Life lessons and adult relationships that will give them the experiences and the confidence to succeed in the larger and ever more complex world, it really does take a village.

City Sail is a summer sailing program run by The New City Kids after school center for middle and high school kids in Jersey City. The program includes on the water time at Liberty Landing Marina, sailing for 3-4 hours in the lower Hudson Tues and Fri for 8 weeks during the summer. Their time on the water is augmented with classroom instruction in boat nomenclature, knots, weather, navigation and tactics, and basic boating skills. The kids may head down to the marina to have fun practicing what they've learned in the class at New City Kids but I see all kinds of math, science, and critical thinking being applied and enjoyed.

New City Kids was the brain child of two Princeton divinity graduates, Trevor and Linda Rubingh, who came to Jersey City about 17 years ago to develop a Kids Church with services tailored to young people. Over the course of 6 years the Kids Church evolved into New City Kids, an after school program for teens. The program currently has 120 kids participating and much of the day to day operation is run by 56 teens employed as interns. The focus is on critical thinking in general life skills like nutrition, health, finance, scholarship and college prep as well as a spiritual component. The kids are all from Jersey City, many from PS 17 middle school and the older kids from 5 Jersey City High Schools, Synder, Dickinson, Lincoln, Ferris and McNair, with the

For the Love of Sailing & Kids

by Jeff Sublett

exception of McNair, all considered poor performing schools by most standards. You would never know that from the quality of work and commitment of the City Sail kids.

The City Sail program was actually conceived at sea on a J24 in the lower harbor. It happened in the shadow of the Statue of Liberty on an afternoon sail with Tony Hinchliff and Trevor Rubingh. The two pastors met in the process of working on a joint Ministry project in Jersey City. When Trevor found out that Tony had been a sailing instructor at the Manhattan Sailing School he was intrigued and they set up a date to sail. Tony spoke eloquently of the "generosity of the sailing community" and how much both sides could gain from "what is clearly a meeting of two different worlds, inner city teens and boat owners". As they say, the rest is history.

City sail started in 2007 according to City Sail Program Director Gabriel Stiritz, who himself was a city sail intern about two years ago. As a neighbor of Trevor and Linda Rubingh, Gabriel was invited to help a new program to get kids out on the water with a newly donated Colgate 26 and he's been with program ever since. It seems the true magic of the City Sail program is that it captures the hearts of all who get near it. The program now has the use of two 26's for the sailing/racing program for the older kids, 14 to 18, and the younger, 12 and up kids start on a Hunter 33 to get out

on the water for some basic boating and sailing skills. This year the sailing program had 23 kids enrolled, most are also enrolled in New City Kids, but it's not mandatory and boasted 85% attendance. This would make them the envy of the schools most of the kids attend. The kids get points during the summer for the sailing skills they master and earn prizes at the end, including a bunk on a Long Island weekend cruise aboard the Hunter 33. I was invited to attend the celebration of this summer's accomplishments including games to demonstrate their sailing expertise. It was a wonderful evening of proud kids, proud parents, proud volunteers and staff all sharing in the visceral enthusiasm that is City Sail.

Liberty Landing Marina has been a supporter from day one with technical and slip space contributions. Their first boat, a Colgate 26 was donated by a Liberty Landing slip holder, Glenn Stevens who wasn't getting much use of his boat and decided it would be better used by the kids at City Sail. As Dock Master Michelle Purinton has said, "the kids enthusiasm is absolutely contagious". This is what lead her, her husband John Purinton and Liberty Landing Rigger Tyler Pierce to approach and work with the Offshore Sailing School at Liberty Landing to donate time on one of their Colgate 26's. This has allowed the program to have 2 boats sailing on Tues and Fri evenings



Tyler's crew getting ready for sea.

City Sail Kids aboard the Freedom 33 dockside.



and has been key to the program. It has allowed more kids on the water and they could engage in competitive sailing and all the strategies it entails. The kids have developed into "able competitors that showed very well in the City Sail Regatta" according to Michelle.

Kevin Wensley, Director of Operations at Offshore Sailing School, said when he heard about the program from Tyler Pierce,

"it was such a compelling story we had to support it" and they do. The program has the use of one of their boats every Tues evening and provided six boats at cost for their regatta. We agreed that the support of such programs is a perfect example of corporate enlightened self-interest, a great way to get new young people into sailing and foster new corporate alliances through the regatta spon-

sorships. The melding of two different Jersey Cities benefiting both, win-win. The program brings together the business owner and professional men and women boat owners at Liberty Landing Marina and the Jersey City inner city kids who, under other circumstances, might not meet these neighbors. These new acquaintances are exactly the accomplished adults the kids need to



Proud parents at awards ceremony, Paula & Dyshanette Smith (left), and Brenda & Seleena Matos.



Going aloft at New City Kids.

be comfortable with for upcoming college and job interviews. I spoke to Paul Silverman this afternoon, a successful Jersey City developer and avid sailor. Also a Liberty Landing slip holder and long time supporter of City Sail, having been involved for four years. Paul said "I've been thrilled to see the kids he takes out aboard his Catalina 28 grow and mature as young men and women, and sailors". Over the years the kids have earned Paul's trust and respect, so much so that on a couple of recent occasions he's allowed the kids to actually dock his boat. As with all guest aboard Paul's boat, the kids are invited to make a log entry and he shared this one with us, "Captain Paul, thanks for a great sail today, you have inspired me to work hard in school so one day I can own a boat like yours". Enjoy a little taste of the kind of rewards this program offers to all involved.

This year City Sail, they held 9 sailing races, had 5 sailing instructors volunteer their time and started a swimming program to complement the sailing program. The kids learned basic swimming strokes and took a water safety test as part of the requirement to progress in the sailing program. Plans are in place to refine and improve the swimming component for next year. Other hopes for the 2013 are the use of an addition boat to get more kids on the water and to expand the racing program with plans to approach the various high schools the kids come from to start an intramural sailing program in Jersey City.

Tyler & crew surfing under sail.



New City Kids BASH!

You're invited to come out to the New City Kids Bash on November 27th in Jersey City, 6:30 to 8:00, please contact:
 miriam@newcitykids.com
 201-915-9896 to RSVP
 All donations are 100% tax deductible.

It cost about \$1000 dollars per kid for the summer sailing activities so this initiative has turned Trevor into a full time fundraiser.

Some quick facts from New City Kids located in Jersey City, NJ where 27% of local teens drop out of high school, 51% of local teens do not attend college and 100% of New City Teen Life interns have entered college in the past four years including \$20,000 in College Scholarship Awards in 2011. A few more quick stats for New City Kids

this year, 131 After School Center students, 57 Teen Life Interns, 11 College Tour Participants, 15 SAT Prep Class Students and 313 boat rides through City Sail in 2011. Quoting from their brochure "New City Kids was established in 2000 to help at-risk kids in Jersey City gain the skills necessary to go to college and attain meaningful employment". I always maintain that it is the larger community that's at risk when we don't reach out to all of our young people.

One of the best indicators of the strength of what the program offers is the varied funding sources that are strong supporters the program, from individual donations to foundations, corporations, church and state funds. If you are interested in more information on the program or want to get involved check out their website at www.citysail.com or www.newcitykids.com. For more pictures go to <http://citysail.com/photos/citysail2/> and <http://citysail.com/photos/2012/index.html> or contact Gabriel Stiritz, City Sail Program Director at 201-915-9896.



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