



Bristol Sailability



Christmas Newsletter

Reflections on the past year

Sitting here in my kitchen writing this newsletter, with the rain thundering down and my garden looking like Baltic Wharf, it is hard to think back to the amazing summer season we have had.

The OLYMPICS

This was the Olympic year and we had our own very special start in the form of a celebration that represented everything we try to achieve.

Blaire, one of our sailors who is part of the Paralympic Transition Squad, was chosen to



were chosen to be Games Makers and at first hand experienced the Olympic Sailing down Portland.



carry the Olympic flame on its last stage of the day across the harbour and to light the cauldron in front of the world!. Aiming High carried her across the harbour and was surrounded by young sailors, canoeists and rowers with 30000 spectators cheering her on. All this was beamed around the world, a fantastic experience that we will all treasure for years to come. Three of our volunteers

Saturday Sailing

This season we have piloted new timings for Saturday Sailing . Sessions were held every week from 1pm to 3pm from April through to late October. This has been a great success and has enabled better forward planning for volunteers and participants alike. The sharing of the Officer of the Day (OD) role has been more equitable enabling the activity to function and our team of “meeters and greeters” has ensured that our sailors are welcomed and prepared for sailing whilst the boats are rigged.

Extra Mid Week Activities

Throughout the season, we have been busy during the week as well as on the Saturdays. For those with more flexible work patterns or retired , this is an ideal time to volunteer to help with a diverse range of participants. Evening clubs have welcomed special groups down to the Wharf as part of our desire to integrate youngsters. Again this year we have worked with the Stroke Association, the Children’s Hospice, Young and Free, Frenchay Brain Injury Rehabilitation Centre, Bath Area Play Project, St Christopher’s School, Kingsweston School, Claremont School and New Fossway and Cerebral Palsy plus, Hospital Education Service, amongst others. Many of these groups are returning to us year on year and stepping up the number of visits they make to us during the week. All this is making more demands on our

organisation requiring even more volunteers to be available.



Some of our participants Comments...

Sailability is about people and what they get out of the sessions we put on. Although it is not always obvious your work can have a profound effect of people’s lives allowing them to develop in ways which are not always obvious. Here is some of the feedback we’ve received:

“I only found about Sailability a couple of months ago, and decided that I would like to find out more so one Saturday I plucked up the courage to go and find out. I went out in an adapted sailing boat. In the past if my wheelchair was not at hand I was very nervous, but from the moment Huw took me out onto the water I did not even think about the chair until sailing had finished. It is hard to explain the wonderful feeling that I get once on the water. It is so peaceful and everyday worries fade from the sheer delight at being able to be free of the constraints I sometimes feel. The enjoyment I feel when the boat moves beneath me, the wind on my face, looking the same as everyone else is just overwhelming at first. I have only missed a couple of Saturdays sailing due to the weather, but even on these occasions I went out on the boat Aiming High and even went out in the Pioneer, which has an adapted steering position with the wheel able to be placed in front of the wheelchair so that I could steer it from my wheelchair. I took this boat out twice, as far up the docks as Temple Meads. It was

exhilarating and a totally different feel. It has given me another totally enjoyable hobby which I hope to continue for a long time.”

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“I was very pleased to be invited by Gill and Blair to go sailing at Oxford with the disability trainer Matt, using the 2.4 boats. I had a very fun weekend and enjoyed the sailing on the Saturday.”

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“He is missing sailing and asks about it each Saturday. He really loved it and it’s been a hugely important part of his life this year.we can see that through Sailability he’s gained better awareness of the need to behave safely near or on the water, learnt to wait his turn, learnt that stealing people’s hats isn’t a good thing and has grown in confidence and really enjoyed seeing everyone each week.

We want to say thank you to everyone who makes Bristol Sailability happen. It’s fantastic and we’ll be back again in the spring.”

Fund Raising

We have been incredibly well supported again this season by; the Scobel Trust, Freemasons, Clifton and Fishponds Rotary Clubs, the Sportsman’s Lodge, by individual private donations as well as the workforce at Garrad Hassan, who raised funds for us by holding their own access regatta.



Building Changes

As part of the Olympic Legacy, we were fortunate enough to be given an Inspired Facilities Grant, which has enabled us to change the access arrangements within our centre, giving us a new wheelchair accessible entrance, a new accessible shower and developing the social areas upstairs. A male changing room and toilet facilities were also added. There is still work to be done, and those of you handy with a hammer and paint brush are welcome to help so that we can finish this phase before next season. We were fortunate enough to have the new centre opened by the Lord Mayor of Bristol in September.

Volunteer Training and Roles

Now that time on the water has decreased we will be setting up training sessions after Christmas to support Volunteer development. The calendar is being prepared and one of our priorities will be that every volunteer has the opportunity participate in Disability Awareness

training. Dates will be sent out as soon as they are ready.

With a larger charity there is greater need for job specific roles within our volunteer force other than being water based e.g. training officer, fundraiser, volunteer coordinator and bosun. If you know of any unsuspecting friends who would like to lend a hand but don't want to get their feet wet, please talk to them about the different roles in volunteering with us.

Changes and New Developments

Over the past few years WESSA and Sailability have been expanding our client base until we



have reached the situation where our charitable aims no longer fully describe what we do. The WESSA committee have decided to widen the aims and objectives of the Charity and take advantage of new legislation to prepare ourselves for becoming a Charitable Incorporated Organisation, (CIO) called "All-Aboard!" As well as a change of name and logo, this will allow us to offer canoeing, rowing and boat building projects in addition to sailing and power boating. We will continue to favour those who

would not ordinarily be able to easily access the water, due to social, health or disability factors, with the aim of promoting social cohesion.

Training has long been provided through WESSA for young people who wanted to go through their RYA levels and progress on to racing through the Volvo club scheme, but we have not had an organisational structure to offer this to our disabled sailors who have similar aspirations. We are in the process of changing this. We recently had a visit from Matt Grier, the RYA Paralympic Development Coach. With his guidance we are setting up a Development Squad to give all our supported sailors the same opportunities. We currently have five sailors about to start training on Saturday mornings alongside the Bristol Sailing Squad. If you would like to help come along.

Next Years Sailing Events

The International 2.4mR class is coming to Bristol for an event the weekend of 5/6 October next year. We will also be welcoming the return of the Access TT Regatta for a third year on 31 August being hosted by ourselves and Baltic Wharf Sailing Club. Get it in your diaries your help will be needed to make it a success .

With very best wishes for a happy christmas and heres to another bumper season next year.....

Thanks to all of you

Steve and Gill

