

Summer solstice celebrated with sailing centre's grand opening

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Parry Sound Councillor Conrad van der Valk and Parry Sound-Muskoka MP Norm Miller cut the ceremonial ribbon during Sail Parry Sound's grand opening Thursday evening.

PARRY SOUND – Sail Parry Sound's annual Summer Solstice party was marked by another special occasion as the facility also held grand opening celebrations at its new location. A crowd of close to 100 supporters, sailors and onlookers gathered at the former Belvedere Point, now home to the sailing centre, on Thursday evening to hear speeches from the sailing school's president Larry Woolner, executive vice-president Terry Johnson, Pat Northey, president of the Georgian Bay Biosphere Reserve (GBBR) and Parry Sound-Muskoka MPP Norm Miller among many others.

10 years in the making "We're proud to show you our new home," said Mr. Woolner. "There has been a lot of wind through our sails since Sail Parry Sound began 10 years ago. We started our sailing school with an assortment of donated equipment and donated boats and four of us co-signed on a bank loan to purchase six new prams (and) one coach boat. And four new optimist prams were donated by individuals. We committed to making our sailing school totally inclusive, individuals and businesses sponsored children. Since then the school grew and it grew until Parry Sound grew and now we are producing our own Canadian Yachting Association certified instructors and we have a competitive race team." Every year the sailing school approached council and requested use of the launch ramp at Waubuno Beach.

Mr. Woolner joked that council often urged the group to find a permanent location somewhere else. "As the program grew, we were encouraged by some of the councillors who are here now to please find your own home, because you're plugging up the beach all summer," he said with a chuckle.

Twenty year lease Three years ago, the sailing school signed a 20-year lease for the property and designed the sailing centre. Construction began on March 15, 2006, and the

group applied for a variety of funding. “Thanks to major grants from FedNor, the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund and the Ontario Trillium Foundation as well as donations from local service clubs, municipalities, businesses and individuals we have a sailing centre,” Mr. Woolner said. The new facility includes the Rotary Sunset Trail, an extension of the Fitness Trail, an enclosed boat yard, a boat ramp, sign and flag mast, and a boathouse.

Former Parry Sounder and sailing student Gaye Facer thanked the crowd for its support on behalf of all the children who have had the opportunity to learn to sail because of generous donations and sponsorship.

“You’ve put hundreds of kids through the program and we couldn’t possibly begin to thank individually the people who are responsible,” said Ms Facer. “Katherine Wheatley (local singer/songwriter) and I used to be lifeguards and sit and watch the view that you’re looking at now and say, pretty much everyday, ‘isn’t this the best place in the world?’ How can I say this, without being emotional? Thank you for making it happen. Those of you who are from Parry Sound know that I’m just a kid from Parry Sound who loved sailing.”