

## Able Sailing helps novices get their feet wet

Author: Courtney Norrie

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Photo submitted by Sail Parry Sound

Able Sail participants enjoy sailing for the first time. Parry Sound will have two accessible sailboats on July 12 and 13.

Wind blowing through your hair, waves rippling around you, feeling free without a care in the world – that's what sailing can feel like. Sailing for the first time can be an exciting and joyous experience.

On July 12 and 13, approximately 40 people will try sailing for the first time. Thanks to Sail Parry Sound, Ontario Sailing and four local agencies, people with disabilities will not be limited by their ability.

For the two days, Parry Sound will be home to two accessible sailboats on loan from the Ontario Sailing Association.

Last summer people with disabilities went sailing 8,200 times across Canada, through the Able Sail Program.

The Able Sail program has been running for decades across Canada.

The Learn-to-Sail training programs typically offered by national, provincial and grassroots sailing associations have been adapted to ensure the inclusion of people of all abilities, even all the way up to the Olympic competitive levels. The introductory program being brought to Parry Sound is intended for people to get their feet wet (no pun intended) in sailing.

It may spark interest from those who really enjoy sailing and those who do have an interest in learning more will have the opportunity to take lessons for a week in the summer of 2009.

Phase two of the project is a boat loaners program during which Ontario Sailing loans access dinghies to Sail Parry Sound to run sailing lessons for people with disabilities.

Phase three of the project would be Sail Parry Sound's purchase of access dinghies and the establishment of a yearly sustainable sailing program for people with disabilities. This is one step towards making our community more inclusive. By having these access dinghies people with disabilities will be able to have one more opportunity that the rest of the population has.

Inclusion is not going to happen overnight but it's a process that will occur over time as society gradually changes and understands that all people deserve equal opportunities in their life whether it be for work, housing, volunteering, or leisure time.