

Parry Sound sailing school set to sail

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by Stephannie Johnson

PARRY SOUND - Just seven short years ago, a group of sailors created a non-for-profit organization—Sail Parry Sound—to restore the sailing heritage in the region. Back then, just a handful of sails dotted Georgian Bay.

Today, with the help of over 300 volunteers, almost 100 members, and more recently a \$46,000 donation from the Trillium Foundation, Sail Parry Sound is once again making sailing a popular sport for children and youth across Parry Sound.

The cheque was presented to Sail Parry Sound by Parry Sound-Muskoka MPP Norm Miller and Trillium Foundation volunteer Peter Daleman on a blustery Friday afternoon outside the Charles W. Stockey Centre for the Performing Arts.

The grant will go towards purchasing two sailboats for the school's racing team and will help with construction of the school's new site on the Belvedere wharf point.

More specifically, the Trillium funds will relocate and expand the boat enclosure and improve the natural sloping site of the dolly ramp for launching dinghies at the new site.

“What a perfect setting and what a perfect location for a sailing school. The work you're doing is making Parry Sound an even more attractive place and is a huge benefit for the kids in the area that are able to participate in the sailing school,” said Mr. Miller. “I think the kids in this area are very fortunate to have a group of volunteers who are working hard to make this a reality. I'm very pleased to see how Sail Parry Sound is progressing through their vision for the future.” Sail Parry Sound's vice president of operations Larry Woolner fondly recalled how the sailing school got its start and has become such a great success in such a short time.

In 2002, the school began as the Silver Sail program for local youth and since then has seen a number of top-place finishes in sanctioned regattas across Ontario and Quebec.

Mr. Woolner mentioned that the school has done its best to include all children into the school, whether they could pay for the program or not.

“We didn't want the racing school to be just for the kids with money. We're really big on making our club as inclusive as possible. We have almost 10 per cent of our students being sponsored. Whether you have money or not—you want to sail, you live in Parry Sound, you're in,” said Mr. Woolner. “We at Sail Parry Sound had that dream of getting more sailboats out here, getting something in for the kids. Now finally, getting a facility. Our dream is to build a sailing centre where we can introduce young and old to the environmentally-friendly, mentally-challenging and physically-rewarding sport of sailing.”

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Sail Parry Sound executive vice-president Terry Johnson, Sail Parry Sound vice-president of operations Larry Woolner, Trillium Foundation volunteer Peter Daleman, Parry Sound-Muskoka MPP Norm Miller and Sail Parry Sound FedNor intern Tom Nelson

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