

Sailing is Freedom



Newsletter of the Disabled Sailing Association of British Columbia

Fall 2014



Founder: Sam Sullivan talking about the early years of DSA, and looking ahead to the future.

Celebrating 25 years of DSA

The Disabled Sailing Association (DSA) celebrated its 2014 silver anniversary by looking to the future: launching two new sailboats and recording a record year.

DSA was the first sailing program for people with disabilities in Canada. It was launched summer 1989, when Sam Sullivan used a British-made Sunbird dinghy to allow 22 sailing experiences at on English Bay.

The program has grown since, and now operates a fleet of Martin 16 sloops at Jericho Sailing Centre – a supporter since that first day.

DSA celebrated its 25th anniversary with an event at Brock House, Vancouver, in July 2014. Pioneering sailors were present, including designer Brent Foote, the first to venture out onto English Bay.

The anniversary celebration also looked to the future with the Christening of two new Martin 16s and discussion of DSA's ambition to ultimately operate a floating dock, which will be more efficient than launching down the slipway.

And by the end of the 2014 sailing season, DSA had recorded 1,067 sailing experiences – compared to 1,004 sailings in 2013 – including 85 by children.

DSA hosted three regattas – New Beginnings, Cascadia and Integration – partnered with other clubs to offer two more – Jericho Classic and Waves – and supported this year's Mobility Cup.

None of this would have been possible without the dedicated volunteers that give their time, advice and enthusiasm, and the support of funders and donors.

Freedom out on the water

Sailing solo this year for the first time was an added level of freedom for DSA member Renuka Senaratne.

She also raced for the first time, which saw the 44-year-old focusing more on technique.

"I was surprised how much I enjoyed racing as I don't really see myself as all that competitive as a person," she said. "I enjoy the challenge of learning how to sail."

"When I was at G. F. Strong my rec therapist looked at my interests and abilities and made suggestions that included sailing. She told me she thought I'd really enjoy it – and kept reminding me by sending pictures."

Renuka joined DSA in 2012 and found that sailing was a completely new experience – one that she really enjoyed. She kept coming back, as much as anything due to the supportive staff and volunteers, who, like her rec therapist "Saw something in me that I wasn't able to do at that time." It was the DSA staff that guided Renuka to her first solo sail this summer.

"On the water by yourself you forget all stress," she added. "You get to experience the outdoors and nature that's very different to what you would from the seashore."

DSA: sailing opportunities for people with disabilities

Looking ahead

The 2015 sailing calendar gets under way with a series of pre-season social events. Program administrator Eric Molendyk will run social sessions, for novice and experienced sailors, at GF Strong Rehab Centre, Vancouver, on the last Thursday of each month, beginning January 29. Info: www.disabledsailingbc.org

Child's play

DSA makes sailing accessible for all ages, and every year holds a kids' day to promote sailing to children. June's event, in conjunction with adapted hiking society BCMOS, saw children experience adaptive hiking, thanks to the TrailRider, and sailing.

Volunteer

If you can volunteer next summer to enable people with disabilities to sail with DSA, call 604-688-6464 ext. 117.



Shipshape: Members of the Deloitte clean-up crew at work on a DSA Martin 16.

Many hands make light work

Volunteers helped Disabled Sailing Association (DSA) protect boats and clean up the Jericho office ready for winter.

The team, from the Vancouver office of financial consultants Deloitte Canada, offered to help get the fleet ready for winter storage.

Under the Deloitte Impact Day, held in October, all employees spend a full day volunteering for local non-profits.

"We believe that the well-being of our communities is directly tied to the well-being of our people and our business," said a spokesman for the finance giant.

Donate your boat



. . .to keep
DSA afloat

DSA's boat donation project now has its own website

www.dsaboatdonation.org

Top finish in his first Mobility Cup

Vancouver's Liam Toone came second in the Gold Fleet in his first ever Mobility Cup regatta, this year.

Not a bad achievement, considering he first sailed as a DSA client earlier in 2014. It was not, of course, the first time the 20-year-old had sailed.

Liam has been on the water since he can remember, and racing in Royal Vancouver Yacht Club since he was 16.

"I used to coach at DSA, until I got ill," said Liam, who now battles chronic pain and fatigue. "I know the Martin 16s and used to race high performance boats.

"I've always enjoyed sports in the water – the ocean just appeals to me.

"I like the strategic thinking of sailing. It's very refreshing once you get the boat going fast in high winds – racing is my favourite part of sailing."

Sailing well, he explains, means mastering a set of technical skills such as reading wind direction – and even coming wind changes – from the state and colour of the water. Darker water indicates wind, and spotting this means keeping up with a Vancouver easterly that can shift 10 degrees in 30 seconds or less.

After being a mainstay of the DSA race club, Liam tested himself against the country's top adaptive sailors at Mobility Cup 2014, held at Kananaskis, AB, in September. "The atmosphere was relaxed and social and appreciative," he said.