

For Sail MV in 2023, a Breakthrough Year

LAGOON POND, more than 500 acres of water with shores in Vineyard Haven and Oak Bluffs, was a classroom for Sail Martha's Vineyard again for eight busy weeks this summer.

On a typical Wednesday morning in July, students in the introductory class, *Messing Around in Boats*, were drifting in Sail MV's new fleet of Hartley 10s back toward the Sailing Camp. On their way they passed kids in the *Minnows* class learning how to sail on a reach for the first time, and students in the *Scup* class playing "follow the leader" in a fleet of Feva dinghies. From the beach at the Sailing Camp, students in Sail MV's windsurfing class were launching out for a lesson on their boards. Meanwhile in the Lagoon's southern reaches, students in the *Mackerel* class, closely supervised, were learning how to recover a sailor fallen overboard, while advanced students in the *Swordfish* class rounded their marks in the 420s, learning the rules of racing.

"To say we use the Lagoon fully would be an understatement," says Andrew Nutton, Sail MV's program director since 2017 and its executive director since this spring. Sail MV's summer program accounts for more than two-thirds of the organization's operating costs each year, and has always been central to its mission. "It's the hub we rotate around," says Nutton – "it's the gravity. If we get that right, all our programs thrive."

THE HEADLINE NEWS for Sail Martha's Vineyard in this past year was twofold: the receipt of a \$300,000 grant from MVYouth in the fall of 2022, and the promotion of Andrew



Young sailors display their certificates at the conclusion of their classes on the Lagoon.

Nutton to executive director, succeeding John Kettlewell, this spring.

MVYouth, an organization founded in 2014, describes its Expansion Grants program as "capital funding for exceptional organizations serving children, teens and young adults." In December, MVYouth selected two of those "exceptional organizations" for grants: Martha's Vineyard Community Services and Sail MV.

Accepting the \$300,000 capital gift, Kettlewell said: "This is going to be transformative for us."

This summer, in the first year of a three-year plan for the MVYouth grant, Sail MV was able to purchase a power boat and a dozen new sailboats specifically tailored for beginning students in its educational program. Dr. Daniel Pesch, president of the Sail MV board, puts the grant's impact in perspective this way:

"This grant went to capital costs, and for years we've been funding those expenses out of our operating budget. This is the first time ever that we've been able to actually pay for our boats, for this essential equipment, up front. But

it doesn't pay our operating costs – it doesn't pay the teachers."

And Sail MV's summer teaching staff, which was led in 2023 for the second year by chief instructor Edie Thorup, is one of the organization's most important assets. Nutton focuses on this each year, recruiting for the next season as soon as one summer program ends. "I think that as an organization," Nutton says, "we're very aware that one thing that makes us stand out is our staff."

This year, says Nutton, "Our summer was better in many ways because of those new boats." But in the end, the new boats are just empty vessels until they're supported by instructors who can put them to use as teaching tools. And this summer, with those teachers and their new boats, Sail MV provided free instruction for Island children – sailing program scholarships – worth more than \$166,000.

Nutton and Dr. Pesch agree that the MVYouth grant to Sail Martha's Vineyard comes as a powerful affirmation of the organization and its work – and that

Programs of Sail MV Impart Skills for Life

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much thanks for this must go to John Kettlewell, whose tenure as executive director began in late 2018 and ended this spring.

“John was such a steady hand at the helm,” Nutton says. “John’s hard work making Sail MV fiscally stable and responsible has allowed us to expand with programs like SailMobility and City to the Sea, and certainly put us in a good position to win the grant. I think Sail MV would be in a very different position today if it hadn’t been for John.”

Dr. Pesch agrees: “John really got into the nuts and bolts of running Sail MV. He had the patience of a saint, working through everything, and meanwhile through all these years, Andy was doing a terrific job recruiting our instructional staff for the waterfront.”

ON THE MONDAY mornings when new classes begin at Sailing Camp Park, parents are invited to bring their children down to the waterfront to see the Sail MV campus and meet the instructional staff. Each morning after that, parents are left at the top of the hill and the kids scamper down the driveway for their classes.

Edie Thorup and her teaching staff meet on the benches outside the boat shed at 8 a.m., an hour before the children arrive. She starts each meeting by asking one instructor, chosen at random, to present the day’s weather forecast. Then she asks each instructor in turn about plans for class – what equipment and which area of the Lagoon they’ll be utilizing, how many children are in their care, which skills they’ll be teaching.

Running through this quiet conversation each morning are two themes which serve as constants: the centrality of safety on the water, and the structure of Sail MV’s syllabus, which describes the skills each student should learn in each summer course.

Nutton says that while it might not be specifically listed in the syllabus, perhaps the most important things kids are learning at Sail MV are self-confidence and independence – and this is part of the reason why their parents are left at the top of the hill. “This is the kids’ experience,” he says. “Where else is a child given



Members of Island Autism enjoy a summer sail aboard a Rhodes 19 daysailer.

a \$5,000 sailboat and told, ‘Now, it’s your responsibility to sail out to that point and back again. We’ll help you if you tip over, but you’re on your own.’”

Edie Thorup says that in her young students, she sees the satisfaction of mastering new skills, and the confidence that comes with it, every week on the Lagoon. She recalls the joy on the face of a boy who came back from a sailing lesson and announced, “I completely didn’t understand about tacking – until I did!”

AROUND THIS HEALTHY core of Sail MV’s summer classes, the organization’s other programs are also thriving:

- SailMobility, the program launched in 2019, took members of Island Autism and campers from Camp Jabberwocky out several times weekly all summer aboard Sail MV’s Rhodes 19 daysailers.

- The MV Rowing Club, with more than 40 members, continues to head out from Vineyard Haven Harbor several times each week in one of Sail MV’s classic Cornish pilot gigs, Cassie and Grace.

- Maritime Studies, part of the Career and Technical Education (CTE) offerings at Martha’s Vineyard Regional High School, now encompasses three years of study, giving students a solid understand-

ing of the maritime industry, and skills that will allow them to go either straight to work or on to college.

- Sail MV offers a fall sailing program for kids in grades 5 to 8 that feeds into the high school varsity racing team. And the high school team had a great spring season, winning the Cape and Island Titles in team racing and fleet racing in May.

- For adults, Sail MV continues to offer a Coast Guard licensing course each year in collaboration with Mariners Learning Systems, under the direction of Andy Hammond.

Watching all these programs flourish, Dan Pesch agrees with Andy Nutton that everything goes back to the good health of that summer semester on the Lagoon, where children learn so much more than the skills of rowing, rigging and sailing:

“We’re teaching kids to be autonomous,” Dr. Pesch says. “We’re giving them life lessons at an early age that will serve them for the rest of their lives.”

“A lot of people do understand that if you’re successful at sailing, if you can build teams and work together, you can be successful at basically anything. What we have, in Sail MV, is an executive director and a board who believe in sailing as one of the ultimate vehicles for building a good human being.”

Summer Instructors: Growing Our Own

THIS SUMMER, two members of Sail Martha's Vineyard's instructional staff were Island kids who came up through the organization's own programs. One of them, Griffin Stead, has headed off to Connecticut College this fall. The other, Lyla Solway, took some time on a windy September afternoon to recount her experience as a teacher in this year's eight-week program of classes.

As middle school and high school sailors donned gear in the boathouse and prepared to head out on the Lagoon, Lyla recalled her first sailing experiences with Sail MV. "I started in Messing Around in Boats when I was eight years old and took beginner lessons here for two summers. I think my very first memory here is from a triangle course, sailing an Opti pram by myself. We were expected to jibe around one of the marks, and every single time I tried, I capsized."

Lyla did a bit of sailing with the East Chop Beach Club, and then joined the fall development program of Sail MV – it's also called the farm team program, because it cultivates kids for the high school varsity – when she was in seventh grade. Now 17 years old and a senior, she's been racing with the high school team for three years.

"In January," she said, "Andy Nutton emailed me asking if I'd like to be an instructor for the coming summer. He said I'd need to go through Level 1 certification with U.S. Sailing, and then power boat certification as well. I took a little time to think about that, but ultimately I knew I wanted to do something different this year, so I said yes."

Lyla gained her certification over three days in Boston during a school break, and

the next big step was what the instructors call set-up week at Sailing Camp Park in June. It was a bit of culture shock and a lot of fun:

"Except for Griffin, I didn't know anybody. I got to meet the instructors – a bunch of loud, friendly English and Irish people – and there was definitely a language barrier to begin with. They call the bowline the painter. They call

"We'd take the FJs out and do team racing with some of the high school team sailors, the Sail MV staff and some alumni from the high school racing program who were here. It was so much fun – it was all friendly, but still very high level racing. That really helped me keep up with my sailing skills over the summer."

Asked what advice she might share with another Island kid considering a summer job as instructor on the Lagoon, Lyla had this to say:

"I would definitely say that it's a great opportunity, but you do have to have a certain level of personal confidence, especially when it comes to joining a staff that comes from a different country, and you might not even understand what they're talking about for the first couple of weeks."

"The other advice I'd give – and this is very specific – is that if you're a lead instructor and it's the end of the first week, you should tell the parents if a student may not be passing the class. Give them a heads-up. Because I found that there are two ways parents and the kids can respond: One kid will say, ah, I don't really

care, I'm just here to have fun. And that's perfectly fine. But another kid will be like, what, I'm not going to pass? I need to get going here! And the next week, the improvement I see is just crazy. They're focused in a whole new way. Those kids, honestly, are the most rewarding to teach."

Looking back at this summer, Lyla said: "It absolutely flew by. We do debriefs at the end of week one, week four, and week eight – and at week four I couldn't believe half the summer had already gone by. At week eight I was like, 'How are we done? This is crazy.'"

Looking ahead, she said, "I'll be back teaching again next summer, if Andy will hire me. I'd like to do another year."



Lyla Solway with her students on the Lagoon.

centerboards, daggerboards. And the boom vang, for them, is the kicker."

Over the next weeks with her Irish colleagues, Lyla said, "I got super-close with just about every one of them. I showed them around the Island, because I was the one with a car. I was over at the house (across from the Sailing Camp) almost every weekend."

Several of this year's staff came from Trinity College in Dublin and raced on the university team, so there was quite a high level of skill among them. Still, Lyla felt that with the experience she's gained on the high school team, she fit right in.

One of her favorite activities with the staff was a Wednesday night tradition:

Sail MV: We're Sailing Ahead, Together

WHEN MY FAMILY and I first arrived on the Island in 2017, we were struck by how profoundly the sea shapes the life of this community. Sail Martha's Vineyard has always strived to connect people more powerfully with what the sea has to offer, and 2023 has been a year to remember in this regard.

Sail Martha's Vineyard would not be where we are now without the support of the community we serve. Your generous donations have enabled us to provide Island families with more than \$166,000 in scholarships to our sailing program, with nearly 400 kids taking to the waters of the Lagoon this summer. To see the excitement and joy in our youngest students as they first get to grips with sailing is something to behold, and fostering these experiences is something that we feel privileged to be part of. Yes, our young charges had a lot of fun this summer, but thanks to modern boats and a well-structured syllabus, each child who passes one of our courses is ready to take their next step into the world of the sea.

Our summer program on the Lagoon will always be at the heart of Sail MV's work, but around that core are many other thriving programs. When I talk to people about our programs, one of the first reactions I hear is, "Wow, I didn't know you guys did so much."

Sail MV works tirelessly to make sure that every dollar we receive goes toward the running and development of our programs. One highlight for us this year was the third full summer of SailMobility, which provided more than 50 hours of on-the-water activities in our Rhodes 19s to groups from Island Autism and Camp Jabberwocky. By summer's end, all who were willing had helmed a sailboat across the waters of the Lagoon. With the planned expansions of this program, we will soon be reporting on SailMobility offering sessions to more Islanders who thought getting on the water was not an option, dramatically expanding Sail MV's efforts to make the sea a resource for all.

The gift of capital Sail MV received this year from MVYouth has come as both an affirmation of the work we do, and as a challenge that we accept most seriously. MVYouth's gift has enabled Sail MV to embark on a three-year program of improving our fleet. But in the end these boats are empty vessels if we don't put skilled and caring instructors around them and build programs that use them to foster the joy of sailing and the confidence that young people gain from mastering new skills.



Sail MV's new fleet of Hartley 10s, whose purchase was made possible by a grant from MVYouth, were in constant use on the Lagoon this summer..

Along with all our board members, volunteers, and the hundreds of children each year who take part in Sail MV's programs on the water and in the classroom, I thank all of you who have so faithfully continued to support this organization. We look forward to showing you all what your kind support can do to enrich this beautiful Island's connection to the maritime world.

Gratefully,

Andrew Nutton
Executive Director

Thank You for Supporting Sail Martha's Vineyard

SAIL MARTHA'S VINEYARD depends on generous donations from individuals, foundations, corporations, and small businesses. The following individuals and organizations made monetary donations. We apologize for any omissions.

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From the Messing About in Boats syllabus: "Students can collect and identify three different types of molluscs and crustaceans."

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Sail MV's summer 2023 instructional team: Front, from left: Rachel Hopkins, Hannah Hickey, Josie Ruffles, Edie Thorup. Back, from left: Miles Jones, Andy Nutton, Lyla Solway, Finn Walker, Juke Johnston, Siofra Collins, Amelia Greene, Elliot Davies and Griffin Stead.

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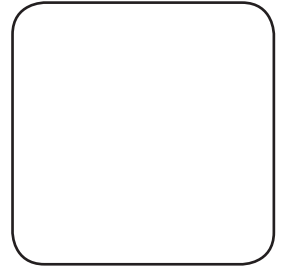
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SUMMER PROGRAMS SIGNUP OPENS IN JANUARY 2024

Registration for Sail MV's 2024 summer sailing programs will open on Monday, January 8. Visit our website to sign up for next summer's instructional programs on the Lagoon.

BILL ROMAN RECEIVES ANNUAL CRONKITE AWARD

At this year's Sail Martha's Vineyard Seafood Buffet & Auction, Bill Roman, manager of the Edgartown Yacht Club since 1989, was the recipient of Sail MV's annual Walter Cronkite Award. The award has been presented since 2010 to honor an individual who has advanced the appreciation of maritime culture on the Vineyard.

In his remarks bestowing the award, John Wilson noted that Roman has been a steadfast supporter of Sail MV since its beginnings, working with Nancy Haskell to ensure the organization had the boats it needed, and with Nancy Victor to launch the high school sailing team.

"We honor a person for who they are and what they've done," said Wilson. "Bill Roman ticks all the boxes."



Good food and good company at the 2023 Seafood Buffet & Auction.

SAVE THE DATES

**32nd Annual Seafood Buffet & Auction:
July 11, 2024**

Vineyard Cup Regatta: July 12-14, 2024