

Sailing School in Smith Cove Gets Ready for 31st Summer Season

By Alan Himmer, LWSA

GILFORD - You might remember the little Sailing School in the loft over at Fay's. Perhaps you or even your kids or grandkids learned to sail there. Lake Winnepesaukee Sailing Association has seen over 3000 young people learn the skills, values and joy of sailing since it was founded in Smith Cove in 1988.

In fact, it is still located on Smith Cove. In 2014, thanks to a campaign led by many generous donors, LWSA's Sailing School moved into its own property, the Dave Adams Sailing Center, next door to Fay's on Davis Road. In the past few years, the LWSA has also managed to expand its fleet by buying not-too-old used boats and a few new smaller boats. So, the fleet currently counts three dozen small sailboats (420s, O'pen Bics, and Optimists) and three large sailboats (a J/80 and two 26' Sonars.) This local Sailing School therefore now constitutes the best place for sailing in the Lakes Region. And, the range of courses and services available now reflects that capability and capacity.

The Sailing School's summer sailing camp program remains the core of the operation and is its main reason for being. (email sailing-school@lwsa.org) Nowadays, it lasts weekdays for 9 weeks from late June to mid-August and during that time it will see over 200 young sailors ages 7-16 come through its courses. Some come for just a week or two, some for more. They all go away with a smile on their faces and the confidence of having skippered a boat all by themselves on the big Lake under the helpful eye of a nearby instructor.

The Instructors, by the way, are a group of mostly college, and some high school students, many of whom learned sailing and came up through the courses at the Sailing School. The Instructors, nationally-certified through rigorous US Sailing Association courses, are strong swimmers and CPR-trained. They are a professional, fun group of young adults, supported by a keen group of teen Junior Instructors. The staff are led by Amy Tripp, a coach and physical education instructor at Gilford High School who is in her third summer as Executive Director of the Sailing School.

For the past couple of years, LWSA expanded into also serving adults with group classes and individual private lessons. The group lessons take place at times convenient for adults throughout the summer and are a cost-effective way to learn how to sail. Private lessons are most popular with people whose work schedules don't fit with regularly-scheduled classes or those people who want to take the lesson in private, maybe with their spouse or kids, and that can be arranged on LWSA's boats or on your boat from your dock. New boat owners or people considering buying a boat also often come for private lessons.

New for this year, the Sailing School is trying out afterschool sailing from May 30th through June 22nd. Running 4pm to 7pm, it is a great way for kids ages 11-16 to try out sailing for a very low price so they can figure out whether they think they'd like to go to the all-day sailing school for a week or two or more in the summer. The aim is to get more kids out on the Lake.

What a lot of people do not know about LWSA is that part of its mission is to expand sailing and sailing opportunities for the community in the Lakes Region. LWSA provides a generous amount of financial aid scholarships every year, because they are committed to making sure that money is not a barrier to any kid learning to sail - parents just have to ask to find out more. And, LWSA has outreach sailing days several times every year when it hosts groups that face physical, developmental or emotional challenges, or otherwise would benefit from the opportunity to go out sailing. Lake Winnepesaukee Sailing Association is a charitable

organization (a 501(c)3, so memberships and donations are tax-deductible, if you would like to help perpetuate its good work.) Support is appreciated, whether joining as a member, giving a donation, or volunteering.

Finally, the LWSA has a leading role in organizing the sailboat racing and cruising that goes on from May to October out on the Lake. LWSA organizes the world's premier fleet of J/80 large racing sailboats ("J/80 Fleet One") and you will see them out there racing on Thursday evenings off of Welch or sometimes in Sanders Bay. They are often looking for new crew members (email j80fleet1captain@lwsa.org). Saturdays see a different LWSA-organized fleet, the mixed-fleet ("PHRF") events, which include racing, cruising, and social events for sailboats of all types (email phrf@lwsa.org). Most of these boats are Gilford-based, whether at Fay's or the WYC or moored off the islands.

So, whenever you are out on your boat or dock, you may notice a flotilla of little sailboats or the big "lwsa.org" mainsail of a Sonar or J/80. Hopefully, it brings a smile to your face and elicits a wave back. In a fast-paced world, it is nice to know that there are kids (and adults - never too late to learn!) on Winnepesaukee learning the self-satisfaction of getting there slower, self-sufficiently, harnessing the wind.

Learn more at www.lwsa.org or email info@lwsa.org or call 603-589-1177