

Learn to Sail Inc. Press Release

Monday, October 15, 2018

Posted by Julie Jackson



IMPORTANT NEW INITIATIVES LAUNCHED TO STRENGTHEN & GROW THE NONPROFIT LEARN TO SAIL IN PUNTA GORDA, FL

We teach small boat sailing in a safe, fun and educational waterfront environment by sharing our skills, knowledge, and resources with youth and adults in the Southwest Florida area.

Punta Gorda, FL, October 12, 2018– Today marks the official launch of the Learn to Sail's improvement project aimed to advance our all-volunteer, not for profit 501(c)(3) organization established in 2015.

“As Learn to Sail continues to grow, we feel a deep sense of responsibility to all children and their families, as well as to our volunteers and community,” said Don Keskula, president and Certified Instructor of Learn to Sail. “These past few years we have worked very hard at putting together a Learn to Sail Program providing children, age 8 to 18 an introduction to sailing. There might be nothing in the world that packs as many life lessons as the activity of sailing.”

Sailing teaches teamwork, engineering, history, patience, oceanography, ecology...all in one fell swoop. Because of this, our organization believes every child should have the opportunity to learn to sail. Our new Improvement Project is targeted at achieving safety and educational changes which will assist us in meeting the highest standards for our organization. The Learn to Sail improvement project has six significant enhancements for our organization and our children.

1. Learn to sail has met and exceeded our goals over the past several years. However, we acknowledge the need to do more. We must always keep our children safe. Therefore, all our volunteers that work with the children are required to complete the SAFESPORT Program.

The U.S. Center for SafeSport is an independent nonprofit committed to ending all forms of abuse in sport including bullying, harassment, hazing, physical abuse, emotional abuse, and sexual misconduct and abuse. The Center is the first and only national organization of its kind. The Center provides services to sports entities on abuse prevention techniques, policies, and programs and provides a safe, professional and confidential place for individuals to report sexual abuse.



2. Learn to Sail now requires all volunteers to complete the NASBLA (or equal) Boating Safety Course. Learn to Sail knows that no matter how much experience our volunteers may have in boating, it is essential to have the knowledge needed to keep our students, passengers and the boat safe. Getting the state boating card and learning the skills our volunteers need to be safe while boating is of utmost importance for our organization. By enrolling and passing the Boating Safety Course, we know our volunteers learn navigation rules, water sports safety, and other valuable boater safety skills.

We have also overhauled our safety plan to include more detailed instructions for emergencies and safety procedures. Furthermore, it contains requirements for the training mentioned above, safety boat usage, and equipment.

3. Our sailing instruction does not just occur on dry land. When our students are out on the water, it is vital that our instructors have all the tools in their belt they need to keep the children safe while also instructing them in various wind and water conditions. Thanks to the Charlotte County Marine Advisory Council and Commissioner Stephen R. Deutsch, who have been instrumental in our progress, Learn to Sail has recently purchased two new Rigid Sport 12 Safety boats with Evinrude 30 engines allowing us to provide rapid aid in case a situation arises on the water.

We also recently added three SailCube sailboats to our fleet. These boats are similar in every aspect to Optimist but are rotomolded for durability and student comfort. These boats are especially well-suited for our younger students and allow them to sail solo in safe, responsive boats.

Also, we have added floating platforms that will aid smaller students and less nimble sailors in boarding and disembarking from boats. The floating platforms will improve accessibility and reduce the risk of injury.

4. The new Student Ambassador Program is a leadership opportunity for students who are dedicated to serving and representing Learn to Sail Inc. Student Ambassadors will provide their vision and perspective to the Learn to Sail Board and Officers, and will also share their love of sailing and benefits of the Learn to Sail program to the grade schools, middle school and high schools in the region. The Student Ambassador will perform duties at various Learn to Sail events in the schools at community events. Student Ambassadors also serve as the first point of contact to students on their first day of Learn to Sail Classes.
5. Learn to Sail is introducing classes this year which will be offered by age group; Elementary (8-11), Middle School (12-14) and High School (15-18). We will also be offering an intermediate sailing class for all age groups.
6. Learn to Sail's new programs and updated initiatives are now accessible through our organization's website <https://www.learntosailswf.com/> We understand that our students, their parents as well as our volunteers want and need to have visibility



into our organization, so we have worked hard to make that possible. Our website now allows students to register for classes and pay online. The students also have access to valuable resources such as the tying of useful knots and instructional videos. Our Volunteers are kept apprised of all events within the organization and have access to meeting agendas, notes, and updates. These updates are beneficial for those volunteers who are only available for on-site meetings during the winter months.

7. Learn to Sail realizes the value of our volunteers and know there is a limited pool of them in the community who are year-round residents and who are interested in teaching kids to sail. Volunteers need to get help with problems and answers to their questions. They need to feel productive, do work that challenges them, and have an opportunity to grow. They also need to know they are valued for what they do. To have highly satisfied volunteers, we have defined a Volunteer Program that That entails the following:

- A designated volunteer coordinator. Coordinating volunteers should not be a shared responsibility that staff attends to when they have “spare time.” Our volunteers deserve more.
- A defined volunteer program, with the role of volunteers in our organization and position descriptions.
- A volunteer training program and supporting materials including a Learn to Sail Volunteer handbook.
- A clear set of rules for our volunteers.
- A recruitment and management plan.
- A recognition program including an annual awards ceremony.

Learn to Sail has received nearly \$100,000 in government funding from our MAC Grants. Learn to Sail Inc. is a 501(c)(3) organization that depends upon your donations of time and money to operate. Contributions from individuals, churches, corporations, foundations and community groups are vital to our operations. Because our nonprofit organization is recognized by the IRS as a charity your donations are tax-deductible as allowed by law.

###

About Learn to Sail Inc.

Learn to Sail Inc. is structured to provide teaching programs in sailing, primarily to children and families. Further, we are organized exclusively for charitable, religious, educational, and scientific purposes.