

Sail Connecticut Access Program
February 22, 2013

Dear DIYC Duckies:

As we approach our 25th consecutive season of providing sailing opportunities to people with all manner of disabilities and/or special needs, I'd like to tell you more about the Sail Connecticut Access Program ("SCA") and what we've been doing.

SCA began operations in 1989, when a former Navy pilot who lives in Guilford, and who had become a paraplegic in an accident, decided that he was not about to give up sailing. Together with a group of friends and supporters, along with a donated old sailboat, they formed SCA, adapted the boat and began offering this opportunity to a very special and wonderful population of people.

Originally based at City Point in New Haven, in 1993 SCA was invited by general manager Rives Potts to relocate to Pilots Point Marina. Here, in the South Yard, Rives and a grant from DEP's LIS License Plate Fund have given us a superb shore-side facility, and an 80 foot long ramp to ease our sailors' movements to and from the dock. It was in 1993 that I first learned about SCA and became involved.

In 2001, grants from DEP and other organizations allowed us to purchase two new "Independence 20" sailboats, specially designed and adapted for disabled sailing programs. A fortunate donation of an older Pearson Ensign gave us a third member of our little fleet. And so SCA began to grow, a process that continues each year.

Each summer, an enthusiastic corps of volunteer skippers and mates work with our paid, part time sailing instructors to provide sailing opportunities to as many as 2,100 people. Dock-mounted Hoyer lifts allow us to easily and safely transfer our mobility-challenged sailors between the dock and the boats. There is no disability that we have thus far encountered, including full quadriplegia, that has prevented us from safely transferring a person into a boat and taking them sailing.

As you can well imagine, safety is a top priority. We would rather disappoint a sailor when the wind and waves kick up, or thunder threatens, than expose them to harm. SCA operates 5 days a week (Mondays and Tuesdays are off days), and the boats can go out as many as three times each day. A typical sail lasts for up to two hours, and those who wish to can steer, trim and learn the intricacies of sailing. We also point out flora and fauna and points of interest, and try to impart a sense of respect and appreciation for the aquatic environment in which we all sail.

Our individual and family members pay a small annual dues, for which they can come sailing as often as a boat and skipper are available. We also get many groups of sailors from hospitals, independent living centers and other organizations who serve our population.

Each summer, we have four Open House days, one each month, where members and non-members may join us for a sail and a (*donated*) cookout. These days typically attract 100 people or more.

People with disabilities generally are not very wealthy, and for those instances where there is a stated financial hardship, we offer full memberships with all privileges, at no charge.

We also provide complimentary memberships to our disabled and wounded Veterans.

We accomplish all of this on a current operating budget of just over \$30,000. There is no fat in SCA's budget; every dollar we receive goes directly into operating the Program. And each year, there are fresh challenges in raising the funds necessary to meet our needs and objectives to keep ourselves, er, *afloat*.

You can probably guess where this part of my message to you is going. Really, though, there are not one, but three ways in which you can support SCA.

First, as Treasurer (*and de facto fundraiser-in-chief*) I would ask you to consider SCA for any financial support you might be inclined or able to offer. Our modest membership dues do not nearly meet our expenses; the Program relies heavily upon the generosity of many people and organizations. And each year I must cast my net ever wider to seek this support. We are, quite simply, an established, growing non-profit organization with a history of getting things accomplished, that a sailor or a boater could love.

And, if by chance your business has a program of giving back to the community, or if your workplace matches its employees' donations, pursuing these on our behalf would be most appreciated.

We are a non-profit organization recognized by the IRS (*our Federal Tax ID Number is 06-1316002*) and donations to us are tax deductible to the extent permitted by law.

The second way to support SCA is by volunteering. We welcome experienced (*and inexperienced, too!*) sailors and boaters as volunteer skippers and mates. For sailors, I can tell you that providing this opportunity to a deserving and magnificent group of people will open up a whole new dimension in your sailing experience. The smiles alone will melt your heart.

And, finally, if you know or know of a person who a disability, any disability at all, by all means let them know about SCA. We want to take them sailing. They can visit our website, www.sailctaccess.org, for more information. Or they can contact me.

I would invite you, too, to feel free to contact me (*by email or cellphone, 203 231 1543*) if you have any questions about SCA or wish to become involved in any way at all. I'll be happy to share my experiences with you.

And if you would like to help us with your financial support, your check to "Sail CT Access" can be mailed to:
Ms. Debbie Ballou
1 Riverside Court
Guilford, CT 06437

All donations will be gratefully acknowledged.

Thank you for letting me tell you more about SCA, and we'll see you out there.

Sincerely;
Mike Miller
ALTARA