

## REGIONAL, REGATTA, CLUB AND CLASS NEWS

# Putting Something Back Into Youth Sailing

By Carolyn Steele

Since David Rae, former mainsail trimmer on *Shosholoza*, South Africa's team for the 2007 America's Cup, returned to live in Cape Town, he has been imparting his wealth of sailing knowledge and experience to the youth in Grassy Park, Cape Town.

Wanting to be part of the continuing need to develop youth sailing in South Africa, Rae became involved in the Zeekoevlei Sailing Centre which was launched in September 2008.

The centre, accredited by SAS/ISAF, is the result of 15 years of pioneering work in development sailing at ZYC, principally by the Rotary Club of Wynberg and strongly supported by Metropolitan Health Group.

The initial idea of the centre, and still today's vision, is to ensure that children from the predominantly low-income, disadvantaged areas around Zeekoevlei and Grassy Park have a chance to access the sport of sailing. The Centre has the support of Old Mutual and the National Lottery Development Trust Fund. Old Mutual; a founding partner, gave the centre the platform and confidence to get started with the project. Lotto has been a key partner in fundraising, enabling boats to be bought for the centre.

In addition, supporters help by transporting children after school for coaching and lessons, maintaining boats, sending sailors overseas to represent South Africa. They also conduct coaching schools, attend regattas, sponsor entrance fees, improve self-esteem and confidence in children, and do everything else that is needed to run a sailing centre. Recently; Lord Irvine Laidlaw has come on board.

The centre has been able to recruit and mentor coaches to provide training and sailing to the students from the local schools. On a weekly basis, an average of 100 children attend the centre, which provides transport from the schools. The centre employs two sailing coaches, Ryan Pentolfe and Mornay Harding, both former students at the centre.

During the summer months the Zeekoevlei Sailing Centre is a hive of activity, and in winter the dam is drained as part of the preservation of the False Bay Ecology Park. To compensate for the lack of water, the centre has been able to maintain momentum by rolling out the Winter Sailing Programme at CAFDA School of Skills in Retreat. CAFDA (Cape Flats Development Association) is a specialist needs school for children with learning difficulties, and provides a programme to assist with the development of skills in the Cape Flats. It is so vital to break through the cycle of urban poverty. Sailing has been an opportunity to get out of the harsh realities they live with, and to learn something different; a new skill.

David Rae and his team have discovered a lot of young talent in the schools. One of the current students, JP Roberts, has qualified for the 2012 RS Tera Junior World Championships in Italy in August 2012. David Jacobs attended the 2011 RS-Tera Junior World Championships in Denmark and is still an active, keen sailor.

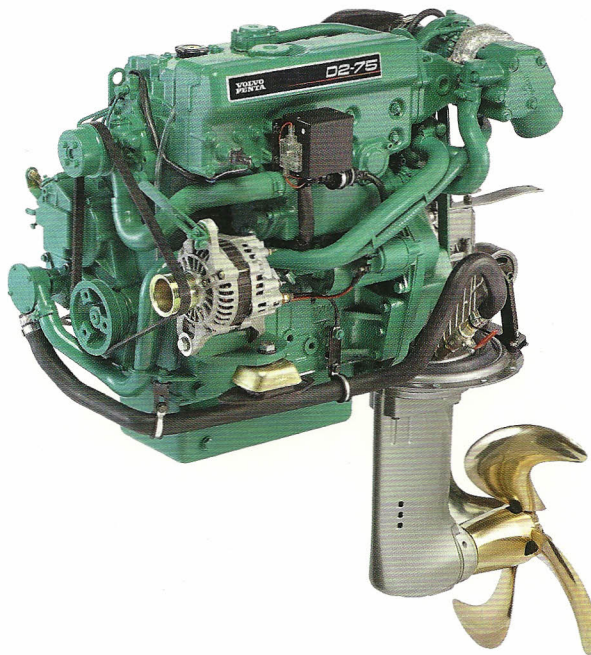
With the support of so many, including local Grassy Park communities, Zeekoevlei Sailing Centre offers huge opportunities for development in youth sailing.

If you would like more information please contact the centre for sponsorship opportunities, project funding or any other interest you may have, contact David Rae or Ryan Pentolfe (zeekoevleisailingcentre@yahoo.co.za). ↓



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