

BACKGROUND COMMENTARY ON YOUTH SAILING

Craig Leweck in Sailing World 2014:.

New organic experiences are critical for kids to remain connected to sailing. Whatever type of sailing you do, find an opportunity to expose it to a young sailor. Keelboats, catamarans, one-design classes new and old: anything goes. Open their eyes to a life outside the junior program bubble. Weeknight racing is low key, and it provides the type of unstructured outing that offers fun and adventure, so let's make sure they're part of our summer twilight action.

Encourage kids to mess with boats. Rig a spinnaker on an Optimist. Send them halyard swinging on a keelboat. Introduce them to windsurfing. Let them sail to a distant beach or destination. Let them deliver their boat to a regional regatta, under its own bottom. Minimize competition and maximize curiosity. When it comes to kids, we like to measure progress, but let's stop measuring, and simply let them roam.

Sailing won't grow without its next generation. If teens and twenty-year-olds don't make connections, they will drift away. Use this summer to show them what they can do when they graduate from the youth sailing schedule. Don't lose them to other sports.

Saving Sailing by Nick Hayes (October 1, 2009 Scuttlebutt)]

"In our attempt to compete with other youth programs, sailing has created another program.

Let's be honest: it's ridiculous to think that we will have a nation of soccer pros, rock stars, touring Irish dancers or NFL players. Sailing offers an alternative: a means to create a nation of strong families, good citizens, and decent and honest leaders. Sailing programs shouldn't be measuring meaningless wins or irrelevant skills. If the program will play a role in society, and in the lives of families, it will be measured on how well it engages families and friends to build lifelong, vital and strong relationships. Youth programs need two things: to be restructured for dads and moms* to participate too, and where that is impossible, to a homegrown leader/mentor model to supplement with real and capable, albeit temporary parent surrogates. *Or even 3 Charleston generations, shown in the photo below.