

JHYC Youth Sailing Programme 2009 AGM Report January 2010

Our year has had its ups & downs! Our Director Yvonne Payne had to stand down due to health issues, and I took on the role in May.

We have tried to structure the courses more, in order to bring more students in to the programme, and have had some success with this. We are currently awaiting a new beginners course for young Antiguan, Eddie Williams is in discussions with Urlings school, and we are hoping to see six or more students starting next week.

Our first 6 week course began in September, and we had our maximum of 12 students who have all achieved a good basic level of Dinghy Sailing.

We ran a second beginners course in November with only 5 new students, some of the youngsters from the previous course continued to attend in the mornings to improve their skills. This course has now finished, and the numbers have dropped off a little, but I am hoping that the youngsters from Urlings will generate renewed awareness & enthusiasm for the programme.

Saturday afternoons see the 'old hands' coming to improve their skills – these are mainly young people who have been attending the programme for a couple of years or so, on & off, and who are keen to keep sailing – this group is currently 7 strong, and I would like to see some of them graduate to AYC training.

On Sundays we have been trying to run events that help fund the free programme for the young Antiguan – there has been dinghy instruction on Sunday morning for all comers, and in the afternoons we have had Laser racing fun events – these were run weekly to begin with, but manning the beach every weekend became too much, and interest waned a little from the competitors too, so we have made this a monthly event now.

The Sunday course started with 5 students, but we are struggling to find people to attend the course this time around – I have had one enquiry from a lady who was not available to start until next week, and I am now canvassing for more students to make it worthwhile running the course – we pay Tony's expenses for being there, and also need to have a chase boat in attendance, as well as someone to be on the beach in case of emergency.

We have managed to supply a chase boat every week, mainly due to supporters offering their time and dinghies – thanks to Nick White, Tim O'Sullivan, Rick Gormley, Gerard Spriet and Gordon Cossar who have all helped out. The programme really does need a chase boat that it can rely on – we have a Jet Rib at our disposal, but it is in need of serious electrical work, and so far we have been unsuccessful at getting it running. If anyone has a rib or similar small boat that we could use regularly please let me know – we would of course buy all fuel etc, and make sure that the boat was kept in a safe location!

We had our first Regatta alongside the JHR Annual Regatta in November. We invited Karl James from AYC to bring some of his students to race against our students – the result was inevitable, AYC were the definite winners, but I think our students will benefit from seeing how well the young people from AYC can handle their dinghies – it has set them a standard to achieve and hopefully we will have another challenge which will be less one sided next time!

We currently have 5 lasers, 2 Toppers , the Hobie 16 and Bernie Wong's Finn in our fleet. Some of these boats are on loan, and some belong to the club. We would like to acquire a couple of Optimists for our younger smaller students to learn in – the Lasers are a bit of a handful for some of them! Our instructor Tony was previously the boat maintenance manager

at Sunsail, and he does a good job of keeping all the boats in working order – not always easy with the conditions on the beach!

One of the most exciting developments this year is the Government of Antigua & Barbuda deciding to make sailing a National Sport, and hoping to make learning to sail available to all children between 7 and 17.

We have been kept informed about the progress of this proposition, mainly thanks to Eddie Williams our new Director of Sailing, whose involvement with the Ministry of Sport has also kept us involved in the planning stages. Elizabeth Jordan and the AYC are working towards establishing a National Sailing Academy, of which we will be a 'nursery' and hopefully provide the youngsters who will go on to be coached by Karl James and possibly even go on to represent their country in International competition. The National Academy is to be funded by a charitable trust which is being established at the moment – Super Yachts at all the big marinas will be asked to donate to the Trust when they are paying their harbour dues – potential sponsors are also to be approached. We hope that when the Trust is established, we will be eligible for some of the funding to enable us to move forward with our plans for the Antiguan Youth. Watch this space!

Thanks to everyone who has given their time to support me this year. I look forward to it continuing in 2010!