

# Boston Harbor Sailing Club



## Wounded Veterans Sailing Program 2012 SEASON REPORT

August 13, 2012

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# Overview

## Boston Harbor Sailing Club

offers sailing instruction and boat rental services to disabled veterans at no cost in order to provide returning veterans with disabilities the opportunity to learn new skills, exercise and relax in a supportive and collegial environment and generally provide support in their transition into civilian life.

BHSC's goal is to teach approximately 30 disabled veterans the Basic Level Sailing Course and facilitate independent boat rentals by those veterans by August 31, 2012.

Over the next month, a master schedule will be periodically updated for the season along with a means of cancelling in the event of inclement weather.

Each day, program members will meet the instructor at Rowe's Wharf and depart via launch boat to the moored sailboats. After a brief, mandatory safety class, much of the afternoon will be spent on Boston Harbor between Charlestown and Logan Airport, learning the fundamentals of sailing. The first class will focus on rigging the boat and leaving and entering the mooring field. As the lessons progress, members will focus on more advanced procedures such as man overboard recovery and radio communications. The final lesson, will test each member's retention of the material. Members who complete the required number of hours of sailing instruction may, at the instructor's discretion, be permitted to rent a sailboat on their own in the future at no cost.

To develop a contact list of interested participants, BHSC will continue developing and reaching out to networks of professionals interested in aiding disabled veterans. Names of disabled veterans already engaged in outdoor activities could potentially be obtained from other programs, such as MassFallenHeroes.org. BHSC believes that interest will be high enough to meet the 30-person goal. A list of more than 40 names seems realistic based on past interest in the program.

# Overview

- Program members will sign up for timeslots in advance.
- Members will be contacted 24 hours before each session to confirm.
- Safety class will be given prior to each session.
- State-required safety equipment is provided.
- Lessons will cover tacking, jibing, points of sail, departing mooring field, returning, docking, radio communications, signals, right of way, fine tuning, man overboard procedures, effective sail trim and more.
- Members must commit to at least 15 total hours of instruction.
- Disabilities will be addressed on a case-by-case basis.
- BHSC does not have access to specialized lift equipment.
- Members will bring food, water, sunscreen and weather appropriate clothing.
- Members will alert Sailing Instructor of any prescription medications they are currently taking.

No transportation is provided. The launch area is conveniently located within blocks of the MBTA South Station stop on the Red Line and several parking facilities (that cost \$20 per day or less). The program information and contact information is listed on the flyer in addition to Program Director Matthew Feehan's

personal cell phone number and email. Any schedule conflicts, issues, concerns or questions can be resolved by contacting Matthew by either phone or email, and if need be, addressed by Mark Healy, BHSC owner at 617. 720. 0049.



# Background

## 2011

The Wounded Veterans Sailing Program was initiated by Matthew Feehan under the auspices of Mark Healy's Boston Harbor Sailing Club. Matthew, an enthusiastic sailing instructor, wished to apply his knowledge to better serve the military and veteran communities. Matthew contacted several rehabilitation centers in the Boston area to meet local veterans who could potentially benefit (physically, emotionally and socially) from learning to sail on Boston Harbor. Accordingly, he initiated a pilot program whereby a handful of veterans benefited from multiple sailing classes throughout the summer at no cost. The positive feedback from these veterans suggested that the program was worthwhile and should be developed further.

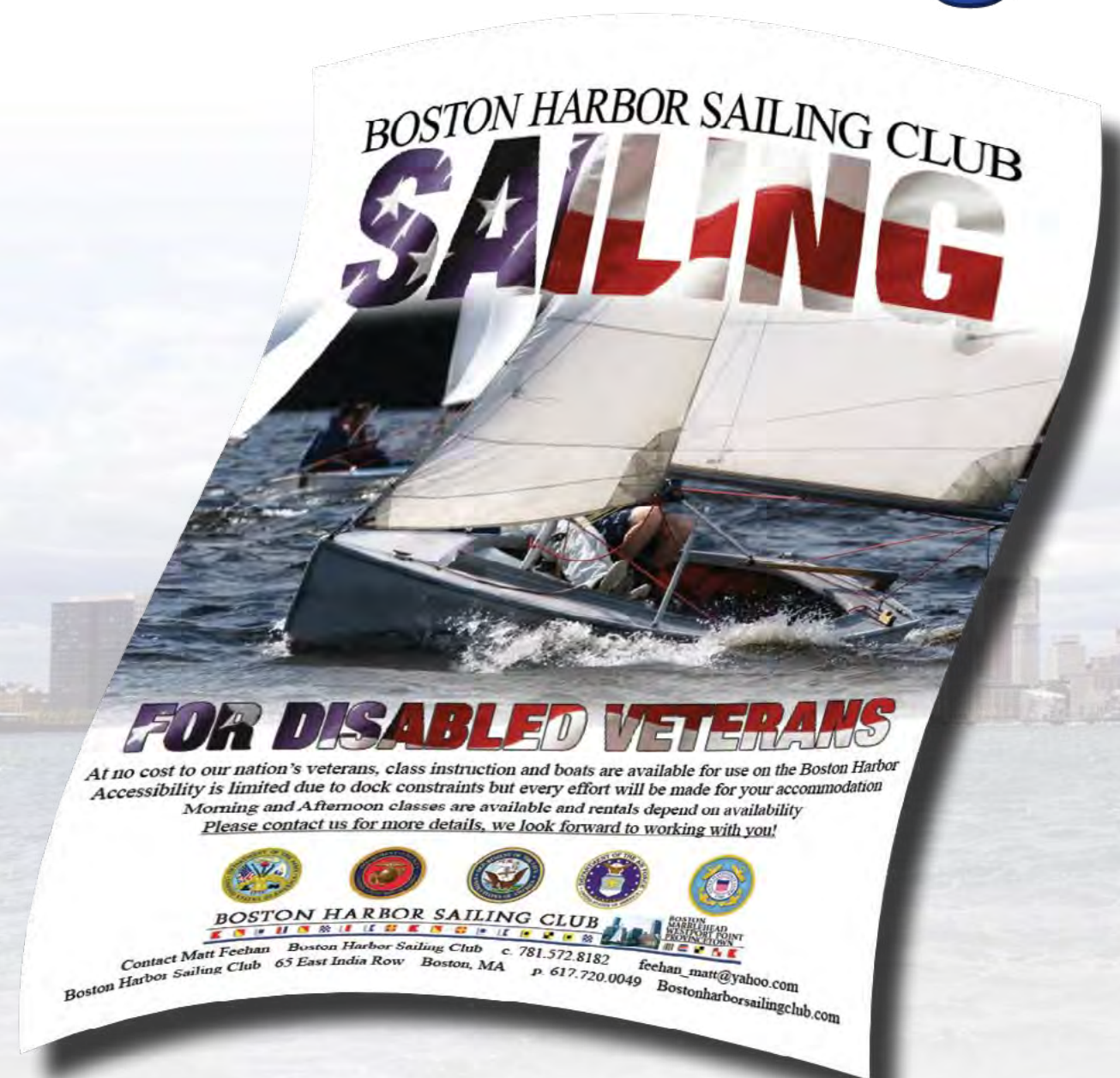
## 2012

The program expanded on the 2011 pilot's success. During the winter off-season, plans were put in place for the upcoming 2012 season. The program got off to a strong start, beginning on May 21 at 10 a.m. at Boston's Rowe's Wharf with a full boat of local veterans. Since then, Monday through Friday classes have been held at 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. each focused on different aspects of the sailing curriculum. Each member was provided a membership card designed by Matthew, along with a set of learning materials donated by the BHSC. A dozen veterans, differing in age and disability, have attended and many have already successfully passed their evaluations. These qualified members can now take full advantage of their fully discounted rentals as a continued source of socialization and learning throughout the sailing season.

**Cdt. Matthew Feehan** is a Communication and Media Studies student attending Fisher College while cross-enrolled at Boston University, with a view to enter Law School to develop a career as a JAG corps military lawyer specializing in Admiralty Law. Matthew has a military background which both inspires him to support fellow service members, and facilitates an effective communication style working with the members enrolled in the program. In 2011, Matthew left the U.S. Coast Guard Reserve, where he had served as a petty officer since 2009, and transferred to the U.S. Army National Guard Reserve Officer Training Corps hosted by Boston University. As a U.S. Army cadet, Matthew has led other cadets in multiple leadership positions (such as Company Commander, Platoon Leader and Squad Leader) and strives to apply his military service, college education, and sailing expertise to assist others. Matthew has training in graphic design and founded JawDropper Designs ([www.jawdropperdesigns.com](http://www.jawdropperdesigns.com)) in 2009. Matthew has applied his design skills in support of others who serve our nation. These have included a sculpture for Boston Firefighter Lt. Kevin Kelley, who lost his life January 8, 2009 while responding to an emergency call, and a logo design for the USCG Port Security Unit 301 to recognize their honorable military service in Kuwait. In addition to Matthew's military experience and sailing qualifications, he has and will continue to leverage his design expertise to facilitate cost-effective promotional material for the Wounded Veterans Sailing Program.



# Marketing



# Progress

Matthew began developing a network of veteran-focused professionals in January, 2012. These include Lt. Col. David Hencke, Veterans Outreach Coordinator at the VA Boston HCS; Francisco Urena, Commissioner of Veteran Services for the City of Boston [seen below, center]; and Andrew DelRossi Biggio with the Massachusetts Iraq & Afghanistan Fallen Heroes Memorial. These professionals, among others, were instrumental in spreading the word about the program. Their efforts, combined with Matthew's marketing campaign, resulted in more than ten veterans registering for the program before the start date.

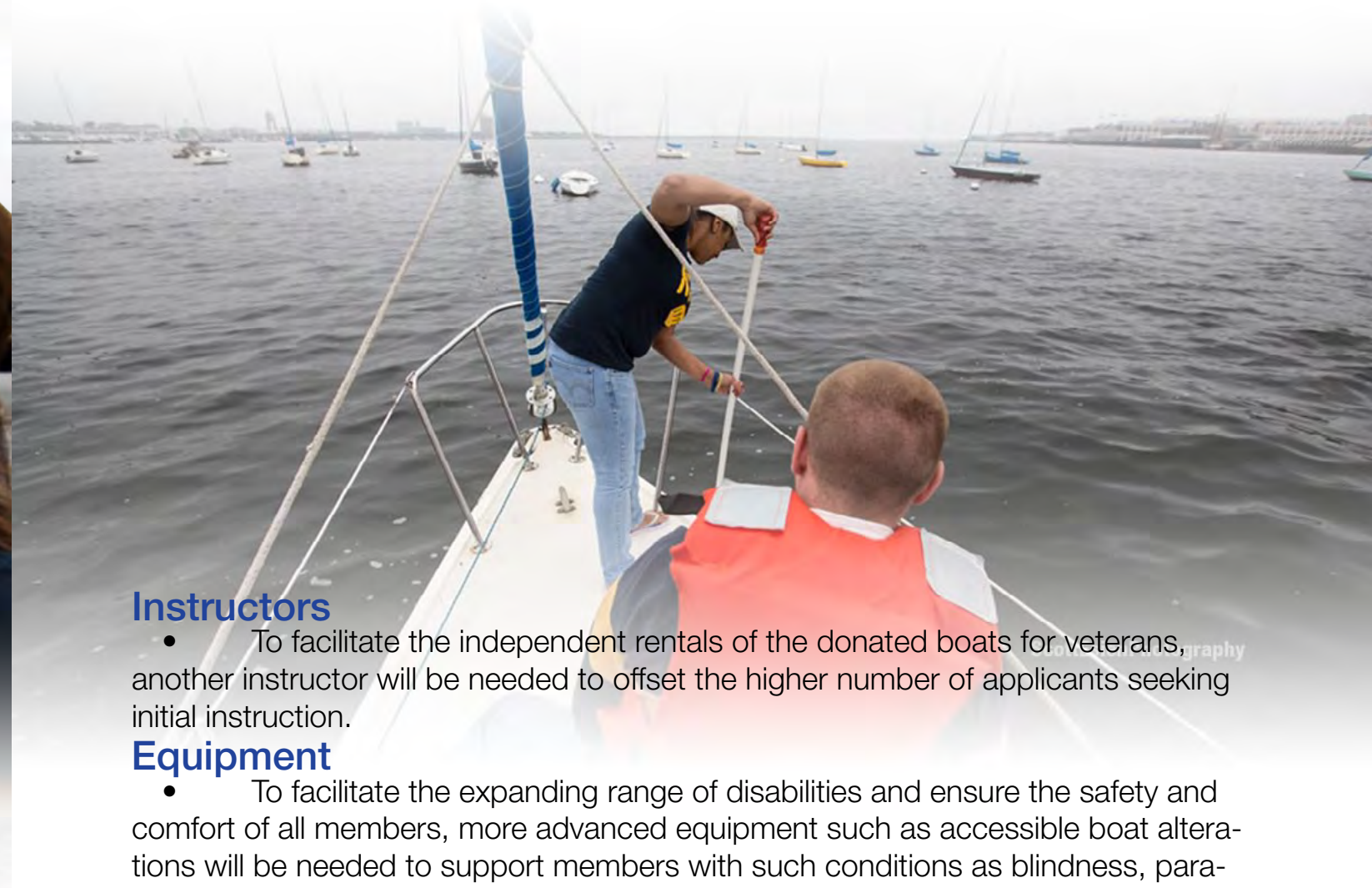


As the program has progressed, over fifteen different veterans have committed time from their busy schedules to attend at least one class, while many more have expressed interest either by word of mouth, email or direct phone conversation. To meet the qualification standards based on typical USCG and US Sailing Association standards, a program member must complete at least fifteen total hours of instruction with the sailing instructor. Members who meet the required amount of instruction should be able to pass the US Sailing Basic Keelboat Certification if they

would like to further pursue their sailing interest beyond the City of Boston. Class sizes are small at the Boston Harbor Sailing Club, with the largest class made up of four sailors, to provide members with the opportunity for personalized instruction. Some members need more time and personal instruction than others, which is why careful attention has been paid to specialized cases. If a member requires more than fifteen hours of instruction, he or she simply carries over into the next lesson, where he or she can receive more instruction on the water.

# Intention

## Plans for 2013



### Instructors

- To facilitate the independent rentals of the donated boats for veterans, another instructor will be needed to offset the higher number of applicants seeking initial instruction.

### Equipment

- To facilitate the expanding range of disabilities and ensure the safety and comfort of all members, more advanced equipment such as accessible boat alterations will be needed to support members with such conditions as blindness, paraplegia and more.

### Scheduling

- To facilitate the complex scheduling demands of the program members, an online, interactive calendar will be needed to help ease the scheduling responsibilities for the sailing instructors.

The cost for these additional amenities will be high and Matthew Feehan will be working on fundraising activities and preparing grant applications to help meet the demands and expand the offerings of the program in 2013.

# Reviews

As a fellow military member, I have had the pleasure of knowing Cadet Feehan through his veteran sailing program. I heard great news of his program through the sailing communities of Boston so I decided to take part in his program. I have seen many examples of his talents and have long been impressed by his commitment. He has been a tremendous asset in developing this outreach program for veterans through the Boston Harbor Sailing Club. I would like to take this opportunity to recommend his program and highly encourage anyone to get involved with Mr. Feehan's sailing program, whether as a sailor or a volunteer. I feel confident that he will succeed in his goals with evolving this program. Mr. Feehan is dedicated and highly motivated as well as an exceptional person and thus far has been an exemplary leader. He has proven to be a distinguished person who is able to successfully develop plans and implement them efficiently. He has successfully demonstrated leadership ability by instructing fellow sailors, many of whom have taken time to share their comments with me regarding his pleasant and encouraging attitude, and the ability to rise to any challenge.



It is for these reasons that I offer my best thanks, without reservation. His drive and abilities will truly continue to be an asset in the military and sailing communities.

Sgt. James Tabares  
*U.S. Army Airborne, 2005-2009*

# Reviews

I served in the United States Navy from August 1982 to September 1986. I was an Electrician's Mate, reached the rank of E4 and was honorably discharged. While in the Navy, I served two tours of duty, both in Europe. I was first stationed in Holy Loch, Scotland, aboard the USS Los Alamos AFDB7, a floating dry dock servicing a submarine fleet. Then after a six month break for electrical training school in Great Lakes, IL, I was sent to the USS Puget Sound AD38, a destroyer tender, which also served as the flag ship for the Mediterranean fleet.

The reason I am thanking Cadet Feehan and the Military Sailing program is because of the hope and pleasure this program has brought to my life. The last two years have been rather difficult for me, first a divorce and then a job loss, resulting in financial challenges. I now find myself homeless, living at the Soldier's Home in Chelsea... This program has been one of the few bright spots and one of the things I look forward to. It gives me a reason to leave the Soldiers Home and to see there is still hope and fun things to do. In addition, Cadet Feehan's patience with us, his students, his knowledge of sailing and rules of the road and his insistence on safety first, makes this program a safe place to learn.

Thank you, Cadet Feehan

Petty Officer Winston Nicholls  
*U.S. Navy, 1982 -1986*

# Summary

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The program has now qualified over five of its growing number of members, which means the network of veterans is growing and can soon become self sustaining. Throughout the season, many more are anticipated to utilize the free rentals to practice and enjoy sailing. Many veterans, some of whom are patients at a VA facility, have taken full advantage of the program and have praised its usefulness.

It has not only been an honor working with veterans in the city of Boston but my most sincere privilege. I am proud to stand among them and continue serving them as they have served our community for many years. I hope that the potential this program has for growth, combined with the outstanding service to our veterans that it provides, will serve as a strong reminder to continue supporting the program and its recipients. - Matthew Feehan

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For details on how to donate and otherwise support the Wounded Veterans Sailing Program at the Boston Harbor Sailing Club please contact Matthew Feehan ([feehan\\_matt@yahoo.com](mailto:feehan_matt@yahoo.com))

