

# Sailing: Part of a Toolkit for Life

*Youth2Adult — Y2A — is a series of articles featuring the “Caribbean youth or adult next door” and celebrating junior sailing’s role as a life skill that might lead to employment within the marine industry as an adult.*

Reading, writing, arithmetic, gardening, swimming, sailing. What if all island children acquired these skills for their toolkit — “toolkit for life”?

Like compiling a tool chest including a hammer, screwdriver, wrenches, combination pliers, straight-blade and a Phillips screwdriver before showing up at the worksite, compiling a kit of basic life skills in youth equips us to succeed in the adult world.

“If you are building a real toolkit, one wrench doesn’t do you any good. You have to have the right size wrenches and other appropriate tools for the particular job. There are all kinds of wrenches. The Crescent company invented an adjustable-ended wrench. That’s what we know today as a crescent wrench,” master mechanic Jim Hutchins explains.

Entering freshman year, his high school started a four-year pilot program in electronics. Out of a class of 30 students, four years later he was one of only two who finished. As July’s Y2A featured youth sailor, Oreakey Joseph, admonished, “Don’t stop until you are done.” It paid off for Jim. With the equivalent of an associate’s degree in electronics, he immediately landed the position of village maintenance manager for a major ski resort. Soon he was given oversight of the entire lift and tramway division. Two decades later, he was awarded the Intermountain Ski Area Association’s Golden Wrench for his ingenuity and mechanical acumen. Though Jim chose to make his career in the ski industry, he later transferred those skills to buying, selling, managing, and maintaining rental properties. Ultimately, his rigging, diesel, mechanical, plumbing and woodworking skills transferred to managing his 40-foot sloop, which he now lives aboard in the Caribbean.

I tell this story to light the imagination of educators, government officials, parents and students. Why not think innovatively for pre-teen and teenager education? Perhaps never again in life are we as exuberant — as much a sponge for learning — as we are in these few years. If governments (including the US) plead financial inability to provide vocational youth training, those within the private sector can look to partnerships to develop young minds and bodies. Statistics prove that high proportions of girls lose their self-esteem as they go through puberty and teenage boys unable to start earning money (or at least see how they might one day earn their way) fall into gangs or other self-deprecating behavior.

St. Lucia’s Jus’ Sail company embraces the idea of building a life skills toolkit. Running charters aboard a Carriacou sloop during peak tourism season, the principals, James and Pepsi Crockett, turn their attention to youth training in summer months. Three tenets underlie the Jus’ Sail Youth Training Programme: Training, Certification and Employment. Our Y2A Featured Adult Vernessa Williams gives us an insight into how her involvement in this program yielded gainful employment.

Jus’ Sail Youth Training Programme activities include

- First Aid and CPR certification
- Swim to Survive Certification with the St. Lucia Lifesaving Association
- International Crew Certification accredited by International Yacht Training Worldwide
- Customer service workshops
- Personal development, conflict resolution and effective communications workshops
- A four- to seven- day teambuilding and leadership development sailing voyage

- A minimum of two weeks work experience within a suitable workplace

Upon completion, successful participants are assisted to optimize their CV and obtain gainful employment.

Before enrolling, the majority of 2013 and 2014 graduates were unemployed and faced limited job prospects. Now they are working within the marine and wider tourism industry.

Sailing can be part of vocational training. It takes organizing, passion and commitment on the part of local communities. The time is now.

## Y2A Featured Youth

Leisl Brewster, 18 years old  
Member: Barbados Sailing Association  
Favorite boat: Laser Radial

At 18, Leisl Brewster can identify the tools she’s gained from junior sailing and already placed in her Toolkit for Life. She counts among them decision-making, teaching and communication.



Leisl says, “[Junior sailing] has allowed me to learn new things that one might not necessarily get with just traditional education at school. As a dinghy sailor you are captain and crew all in one and you have to call all the shots in your boat. It has

definitely helped me in decision-making. Sailing has made me more observant, as you always have to be aware of changing conditions when you are out on the water. In school it has allowed me to build up my résumé.

“I have been given amazing opportunities through sailing,” she adds, “which include crewing for HRH Prince Edward on a J/24 in the Royalist Regatta and representing Barbados in the Caribbean Dinghy Championships on several occasions. Through my part-time employment with Lm2Sail (a sailing school administered by Barbados Sailing Association), I followed the lead of instructors Isaac and Marianne Brown to become a better teacher and communicator and learn how to deal more effectively with children.”

Leisl started sailing at nine years of age. “Every summer the Barbados Optimist Dinghy Association would run a set of sailing camps. At that time, Peter “Wipers” Hoad was the head instructor. The summer before I started, my sister did one of the camps, which she seemed to enjoy, so my mother decided to enroll me. At the end of the camp, I wanted to sail for the rest of the summer. After that, I was hooked!”

Barbados Sailing Association Race Team Manager Penny McIntyre says, “Leisl is very humble and has just become a Duke of Edinburgh Barbados Bronze awardee.” (Running in Barbados since 1963, the Duke of Edinburgh program “gives all young people, 14 to 25, the chance to develop skills for work and life, fulfill their natural potential and have a brighter future.”)

Going forward, Leisl says, “I would like to help in the

development of youth sailing in Barbados by encouraging and building enthusiasm for sailing in the kids who are either now learning to sail or those who are now going into racing. I would also like to help Lm2Sail reach their goal of introducing sailing to a wider portion of the Barbadian population.”

Her message to other Caribbean youth: “It’s important to enjoy what you are doing because if you enjoy it you have better chances of success.”

## Y2A Featured Adult

Vernessa Williams, 21 years old  
Employment: Operations Assistant, Dive St. Lucia  
Growing up in La Clery near Vigie Airport in St. Lucia, Vernessa Williams was introduced to sailing at the Jus’ Sail Youth Sailing Programme. Provided by the Jus’ Sail yacht charter company at no charge, the program was a great opportunity for Vernessa to overcome her fear of the water. Her first step was achieving the Swim to Survive certificate.

Highlights of the program for Vernessa were participating in the St. Lucia segment of the global Bart’s Bash sailboat race (including enjoying instructor Miss Peps’ famous banana bread!), a tour aboard a St. Lucia Marine Police vessel and a ride to their headquarters in Castries, four days spent sailing the coastline of St. Lucia in a catamaran, fish identification and snorkeling, Marine Park Service Rangers taught participants about marine life, including how to prepare and cook Lionfish.

“I learned boat and nautical terminology and basic navigation skills, and practiced how to drive a dinghy and tie knots. The best part was skipping the J/24 and the Carriacou Sloop,” Vernessa says.

Beyond boat handling, she identified life skills obtained from the program as self-discipline, self-motivation and customer service.

IGY Rodney Bay Marina General Manager Simon Bryan spoke to the young adults about attire and first impressions related to the job interview process. “He reviewed our job applications and gave us editing tips. Then James from Jus’ Sail set up a meeting with Dive St. Lucia about hiring opportunities,” Vernessa said. Using her new interviewing skills, she was

chosen from a field of nine applicants as a dive boat deckhand. She was then moved into the Dive St. Lucia shop, where she puts her customer service skills and telephone etiquette to use.

Vernessa enjoys the tourism industry and aspires to be “the best front desk operator”, to become a Dive Master and to mentor those coming up through the youth sailing program.

Her message: “Never say you can’t. Ask questions. There is no dumb question. Lastly, if you want to achieve something, do it. No procrastination.”



## Caribbean Sailing Association Committed to Youth Development

A special section of the Caribbean Sailing Association (CSA) website, <http://caribbean-sailing.com>, is dedicated to Youth Development. The CSA is interested in supporting current grassroots youth sailing programs and communities that wish to start a junior sailing program, as well as long-established clubs. Ellen Birrell, CSA Sailing Development Chair, says, “We will continue to build this page to become a robust resource for youth sailors, leaders and coaches.”

The CSA is a federation of territories and clubs that promotes sailing activities within the Caribbean, and promotes Caribbean sailing to the world. Originating in the Eastern Caribbean, it has since broadened to cover the entire Caribbean region. The CSA operates in parallel with the world body of sailing: the International Sailing Federation (ISAF). In each member country the ISAF has a National Member Authority.

Youth sailing development is a priority for the CSA. In an effort to assist youth leaders in developing their own programs by networking to see how other clubs overcome challenges and move forward, the CSA is collecting contact information on each youth program. If your club is not listed with the CSA, please submit your program name, location, and best contact’s phone and e-mail address to [ypsouth@caribbean-sailing.com](mailto:ypsouth@caribbean-sailing.com).

The CSA Youth Calendar is dedicated to youth events across the Caribbean. Visit <http://caribbean-sailing.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/REGATTACalendar3.pdf>.

If you have a youth event that is not listed, please fill out the form at <http://caribbean-sailing.com/caribbean-race-calendar/submit-event-dates>.