

Coming together behind the scenes is never more important than when organizing a sustainable youth development organization — like junior sailing! Each club in existence today has its story. Exploring these stories emboldens individuals within other communities to think, “We can do this!” And so it goes. When Roger Bannister broke the “four-minute mile”, he shattered a limiting paradigm: “A human cannot run a mile in less than four minutes.” News traveled fast. Within days of Bannister’s shattering performance, individuals scattered around the world also broke through. This is what we want for junior sailing in the Caribbean.

Aqua Mania’s Garth Steyn had an employee who needed a captain’s license. At the time, there was not a certifying institution on St. Maarten. RYA certification was too expensive. Garth took the young man to Anguilla where he secured the necessary licensing. At this point, Garth thought: “Unlike Antigua and Anguilla, where you see local people captaining and crewing sailboats, we don’t have that in St. Maarten.” Realizing that the local youth were disproportionately under-represented in St. Maarten’s marine industry, he set out to do something about that. With help from Magnis NV’s Lorraine Talmi (like Garth, a St. Maarten Marine Trade Association [SMMTA] Board member), they formed the Kidz at Sea Foundation.

Identifying boatbuilding as an entry path into the marine world, Garth first obtained stitch-and-glue method Skerry kit boats from Chesapeake Light Craft. He says, “When the youth first saw the cardboard box arrive that held the kit boat, they couldn’t believe that from this would come a water craft. After stitching and gluing, fiberglassing and painting, then putting the boats into the water and seeing them float, the kids were elated!” They’d made it themselves.

Originally called “The Build Your Future Project” in 2012, Kidz started out as a joint venture of SMMTA and St. Maarten Sailing School to build five vessels. Heineken Regatta organizers saw a promotional opportunity and commissioned an artwork competition in which the winners would go on to decorate a sail for the new

ness and caring for others on and off the water is evident as he helps new sailors rig and launch club boats. It is the collaboration of his father allowing his premises for club storage and holding sailing sessions and his mother’s willingness to manage club operations that keeps L’Esterre Junior Sailing (LJS) steaming along.

At only seven years old, Aaron followed his older brother to an informal sailing program taking place on the beach of Tyrrel Bay in southwestern Carriacou. “I went with my older brother on Saturdays. We would ride our bikes down there,” Aaron says.

The sailing club had its up and downs until Aaron’s mother, Allison Caton, agreed to become director in 2012. With ongoing instruction from Kirsann Boatwain and Akim Clement, the club is in its third year.

Of the junior sailing program Aaron says, “It has helped me to work as part of a team. We need each other to carry the boats down to the sea. It also forces us to be on time. If we arrive late and miss the ground school, we will not be allowed to sail and I do not want that to happen to me.” When asked if there was anything he’d like to see change: “I wish we could sail every day.” Now seven years into participating in junior sailing, Aaron sees his role volunteering to teach the new kids how to tie knots, learn boat parts, rig the boats and sail them. Going forward, Aaron wants to learn to build boats and to sail bigger boats.

Aaron’s message to other Caribbean youth: “Learn to sail — it is so much fun!”

Y2A Featured Adult

W. Gerald Wyllis, 53 years old

Home Country: Dominica

Employment: Assistant Dock Master, Sapphire Beach Resort & Marina, St. Thomas, USVI

Growing up in Roseau, Dominica, Gerald Wyllis learned to swim in the sea and the river near his house. Though he did not learn to sail (junior sailing programs in Dominica are still limited and with TS Erika’s recent devastation this aspect of youth

COMMUNITY

Youth2Adult – Y2A – is a series of articles celebrating sailing’s role in youth development.

boats. Soon Island Water World, Budget Marine, FKG Marine Rigging and Fabrication, St. Maarten Sails & Canvas, the Harbor Group of Companies and Safe Cargo Services vowed sponsorship. The Caribbean International Academy, Milton Peters College (MPC), St. Dominic High School and Secondary Vocational Education signed on to do the building. Aqua Mania provided a shed in which the first boat could be constructed. One by one, more and more individuals and companies committed to see this worthy project succeed including Saamwerkende Fondesen (Cooperative Funding) and mentors Dougie Brooks, Iain Mobbs and Rien Korteknie.

In 2013, ten 16- to 19-year-olds raced aboard a Catalina 36, *Moon Dance*, and a Beneteau 30, *Vanille*. They earned this privilege by also enrolling in a community service program. By utilizing an online course provided by NauticEd (www.nauticed.org) for ground school in sail trim, rules of the road, etcetera, 80 MPC students were introduced to sailing that year.

In 2014, thanks to Jeff Boyd of St. Maarten Shipyard, Kidz built a new clubhouse and added stitch-and-glue stand up paddleboard (SUP) building. Hurricane Gonzalo demolished the clubhouse later that same year, and although the Hobie Cats, Skerries and SUPs survived there is now nowhere to launch them.

Like Antigua, St. Maarten has sailing in their school curriculum. Unique to St. Maarten, instead of offering standard woodshop classes, high schools are offering boatbuilding. That is where Kidz’ kids are currently hard at work building a 26-foot Dudley Dix sailboat. They hope to complete it in time to race in the March 2016 St. Maarten Heineken Regatta.

In March of this year, co-eds from three high schools comprised the St. Maarten Youth Sailing Team, competing on newly acquired 49-foot *Sail la Vie* and on *Moon Dance*. Kidz at Sea will be featured in an October 24th, 2015 session of the Caribbean Sailing Association Annual Conference at Divi Resort, St. Maarten.

Incoming paradigm: “Junior sailing thrives in the Caribbean. We can do this.”

Y2A Featured Youth

Aaron Malcolm, 13 years old

Member: L’Esterre Junior Sailing, Carriacou, Grenada

Favorite boat: Mom, an Optimist hybrid

Aaron Malcolm turns 14 years of age this month in Carriacou, Grenada. His father owns and operates Off The Hook restaurant and lounge. His mother owns and operates Isle of Reefs Tours. With Aaron’s favorite subject at school being Math, his favorite sailing activity racing, and his aspirations for boatbuilding and big-boat sailing, he may have entrepreneurship in his blood. Aaron is not self-absorbed though. His kind-

development is on hold) he began working for the Port Authority right after finishing college. Gerald explains, “I started as Junior Clerk with responsibilities such as tallying cargo to the transit sheds and, from there, Maintenance Department Stores Clerk, then Senior Clerk responsible for shipping. I saw clearly that I wanted maritime work on ships and around ports.”

In 1994, Gerald attended Jamaica’s Caribbean Maritime Institute. Learning tenets of survival aboard, such as firefighting, first aid and survival and rescue, he returned home. This fulfilled Dominica Air & Sea Ports Authority’s requirements to become a Licensed Harbor Pilot. He performed docking and undocking of chemical tankers, cargo, container and cruise ships.



In 2009, he obtained a Green Card and travelled to New Jersey to expand his career. With the US economy bad, job prospects were slim and he returned to Dominica. Gerald continued to deliberately position himself in US waters, believing in the wide range of opportunities therein. By 2012, Gerald left Dominica and went to St. Thomas. On the Virgin Island Labor Department website (VIEWS) he noticed that Sapphire Beach & Resort Marina was looking for an assistant dockmaster. He handily secured the position, which he still holds today. Compared to the Dominica Port Authority, which is so large, his work initially felt “cramped and a little constrained” at the 69-slip marina. But Gerald believes in taking opportunities and expanding one’s horizon, so he has focused on the positives and lives comfortably on St. Thomas.

The skill set he utilized to succeed in Dominica is the same one he uses in Sapphire Beach Marina: providing services. Looking forward, Gerald will keep an eye out for other maritime opportunities. “I will continue to progress.” As Gerald sees it, “We’re here for the purpose. In your job you should have a purpose, just as you do in life.”

His message to Caribbean youth: “Think outside the box. Burst through the ceiling that you perceive limits you. Sometimes young people graduate from high school and think ‘that is it’ and don’t look beyond. Broaden your horizons.” Lifting his right hand as if cranking a wheel, he raises his eyebrows and leans forward, “Put up a periscope. Look above and beyond what you thought was initially possible.”

