

Sailing toward an exciting future

Seminole youth hones his skills in Calvary Episcopal Church program

By BRIAN GOFF

INDIAN ROCKS BEACH – It is difficult to imagine that getting into a small sailboat, not much bigger than a bathtub, could possibly lead to something significant in life. But it can. Just ask 15-year-old Josh Leibe of Seminole.

Leibe is part of the Calvary Episcopal Church sailing program and his success in that program has him focused on sailing as a way to further his education and perhaps some day become a doctor.

For the past nine years Leibe has been participating in the various sailing camps at the church. Just a few months ago he began taking part in the new racing program where a handful of young sailors gather every Saturday and race around the Intracoastal Waterway. Then, he scored a third-place finish in the Dunedin Cup, and more recently in the David Islands Cup. That makes two third-place finishes against more seasoned sailors who had been racing a lot longer.

"I had confidence going in," said Leibe. "But not that great, those were my first regattas."

Buoyed with the confidence of those finishes Josh now hopes to catch on with the 420 program with the Clearwater Community Sailing Center. A 420 is a larger sailboat with a crew of two. After that there is the Laser, yet another sailing class.



Josh Leibe sails his Optimist sailboat in which he recently took two third-place finishes at local regattas.



Photos by BRIAN GOFF

From left, Father Bob Wagenseil and his dogs, Augie and Boson, sailing coach Niko Lyons, and IRB Rotary Member Pat Marzulli gather on the new sailing program instructor's boat paid for by the IRB Rotary Club.

Continued success in those areas could lead to success in life, according to Josh.

"I want to go to the Naval Academy and study medicine," he said. "If I get good enough at sailing then I could get into school that way."

If that happens no one will be prouder than the founder of the sailing program at Calvary Episcopal, The Rev. "Father Bob" Robert Wagenseil. His own pas-

sion for sailing led him, together with Pinellas Suncoast Fire and Rescue, to start the program. It was a modest beginning.

"When we began we had only 12 kids. Now we have over 50 and the program continues to grow," Wagenseil said.

Father Bob is also proud of the fact that the \$80 they charge for a two-week camp is far less than the \$300 a week charged by other sailing organizations.

The boats used by the young sailors are either Walker Bay 8 training boats, or Optimist racing boats. It was in an Optimist boat in which Leibe had his success.

Community groups and businesses support the sailing program. In addition to the church and the fire department, sponsors include Guppy's restaurant and Moss Feaster Serenity Gardens. Recently the IRB Rotary

Club donated \$4,000 so the club could buy a new powerboat, which is necessary for a racing club to participate in events.

Father Bob also noted a church member, who wants to remain anonymous, recently donated \$10,000 so the club can buy three new boats, necessary to accommodate the rising number of participants in the program.

Racing sailboats is serious

business for the participants who have to be aware of safety above all else. It is hard work and requires long hours of training. For Leibe, however, it is a labor of love.

"I began at one of the camps and immediately got hooked," he said. "If I wasn't sailing all the time I think life would be boring. I'd probably be playing some team sports, maybe soccer. But I'd much rather be doing this."

IRB Boat Club heads to The Pub

INDIAN ROCKS BEACH – The IRB Boat Club will gather at The Pub in Indian Shores Saturday,

Jan. 28, 2 p.m.

There are 35 floating docks for the boats and The Pub is offering

happy hour prices on drinks. The Coast Guard Auxiliary will be there offering free safety in-

spection of club member's boats. Call Bob Griffin at 430-8300.

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