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Boating on the Bay



Women Discover the Wonders of Sailing

BY SAMANTHA PARENT

“Ladies Seminar Was a Smashing Success,” read the headline in the Corinthian newsletter, *the Telltale*, in 1985.

Twenty-three years ago, three women from Corinthian Yacht Club (CYC), Jytte Birnbaum, Rosalind Colver and Renee Stoleway, launched the first sailing seminar in response to a request from women who wanted to learn more about sailing. Initially, the seminar took place every other year, and 15 to 20 women attended. Now it is held annually, and over 65 women participate in what one of the Bay Area’s premier instructional sailing events.

The program has evolved over time. A few years ago, coordinator Deborah Newton, a specialist in workshop design and a novice sailor, re-vamped the seminar and made it more interactive by focusing on many of the basic skills she was learning from her husband, experienced sailor Rich Lauman.

“We spend about one-third of the seminar in the classroom learning concepts and understanding things like safety, do’s and don’ts, terminology, maneuvers and tides and currents,” commented Deborah. “Then we move to stations, where students practice skills such as tying knots, sending a radio message, coiling and tossing lines and trimming sails.”

Each afternoon, students receive on-the-water sailing instruction. CYC members and other sailors from around the bay volunteer and skipper 18 to 20 boats, and three or four students are assigned to each boat depending on their skill level, along with a female instructor. Onboard, students try different roles including steering the boat. During the second session, students have a friendly “race” on the Bay after learning racing rules and charting their course. Year after year, this challenge has been one of the seminar’s highlights.

According to Heather Hurley, who participated in the seminar last year, the course is designed to introduce women to sailing in a “non-stressful, non-competitive” environment. Beginners have a chance to meet and network with other sailors, and those with experience share their wisdom with beginners.

CYC welcomes new sailors who want to learn to sail, hone their skills or make friends. Cathy Beam, one of last year’s participants, said, “I was new to the Bay Area and the seminar was a great way for me to refresh my skills and meet new friends. After the seminar, I joined Corinthian and started sailing on Friday nights. It’s made a huge difference in my life and has allowed me to share my love of the water with some fantastic people.”

The program is open to the public, and beginners are welcome. This year, Session 1: Basic Sailing Seminar will take place on May 19 and 20, and the cost for non-CYC members is \$170. Session 2: Intermediate Sailing is scheduled for June and costs \$90 for non-members. The cost for both sessions is \$240.

For more information, contact information@cyc.org or call 435-4771. For an online registration form, go to www.cyc.org and click on Corinthian Women. It’s a great way to experience the joy and wonder of sailing.

Deborah Newton contributed to this story.