

# 5 for Good: East Boston programs work to make the waterfront accessible to all

Piers Park Sailing Center, Save the Harbor/Save the Bay offer youth activities

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## BOSTON —

A pair of programs is working to ensure the Boston waterfront is accessible to all.

The Piers Park Sailing Center and Save the Harbor/Save the Bay have joined forces in East Boston to educate local kids about the environment and get them out onto Boston Harbor.

Alex Defronzo is the executive director of the sailing center, he said for 20 years the center has been removing barriers to boating.

“For many of them, when they come down here, it’s their first time ever having been on the water,” Defronzo said. “Sailing often conjures up images of maybe elitism. Our mission here is inclusive empowerment.”

Defronzo said the price of lessons is based on need, and anyone who can’t pay, doesn’t. Campers said they learn much more than just the mechanics of sailing.

Juan Ochoa is 10 years old. He talked about proper etiquette.

“You have to have proper manners and respect your crew members,” Ochoa said.

Piers Park is one of 12 locations where Save the Harbor/Save the Bay runs its Harbor Explorers program.

Chris Mancini, who works for Save the Harbor, said the organization works hard to entice more people to enjoy the harbor.

“Despite 2 million people living within walking or T distance of the water, still a lot of people don’t think about using it,” Mancini said.

He said a host of free activities are available.

“From fishing 101 (to) crabbing, flounder anatomy and fish printing,” Mancini said.

Randall Lyons, of the Massachusetts Marine Trades Association, said exposing kids to boating is important and could help them long term.

“The boating industry has a lot of jobs and careers available and we don’t have enough people to fill them,” Lyons said.

Ashley Munguia is training to be a counselor at the Piers Park Sailing Center. She said too many kids don’t explore the natural environment.

“They spend most of their time at home, just kind of inside,” Munguia said. “This is a chance for kids to experience something new.”

The Piers Park Sailing Center and Save the Harbor/Save the Bay are two of 16 organizations recently awarded grants by the Massachusetts Marine Trades Association to promote kids and boating.

The Trade Association also has scholarship opportunities available for young people interested in studying the maritime industry.

Find out more about those opportunities here.