

East Boston

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East Boston YMCA and NOAH Receive Better Beaches Grant

By John Lynds

Both the East Boston YMCA and the Neighborhood of Affordable Housing (NOAH) were recipients of the Save the Harbor/Save the Bay's annual Better Beaches grant program.

The two Eastie non-profits were among 27 organizations along the state's shoreline that will run free activities for residents this summer.

The YMCA received \$2,500 while NOAH received a grant for \$1,000 for free family beach activities at Constitution Beach in Eastie.

The grant will enable the YMCA to again hold its annual "Beach Kick-off Day" on Constitution Beach to raise awareness about their summer food service program. The event will feature face painting, sand castle contests, sports, games, arts and crafts, music, and an opportunity for community members to meet with organizations that will be offering programs on Constitution Beach during the summer.

The grant award will also support the 'Y' late season movie night, campfire night, and beach activities for local youth in late August. The 'Y' will also use the events to highlight the Ashley Street Youth Center near the beach, which will give children the opportunity to continue their activities indoors and also provide the summer food service program when the beach is closed due to weather.

"As a recipient of the better beaches grant we look forward to partnering once again with Save the Harbor in bringing people together and strengthen and educating our communities while enjoying our public swimming beaches that connect us to each other," said YMCA Executive Director Ann-Margaret Gutierrez.

Over at NOAH, Executive Director Phil Giffie said the grant money will be used again for free kayaking at Constitution Beach all summer long.

Last summer, the free kayaking program at the beach run by NOAH's Youth Crew had more than 3,190 participants. That number coupled with the kayaking regatta and other waterfront boating events showed that over 3,300 boaters were on the water last summer in Eastie.

In 2016, Save the Harbor and the Department of Conservation and Recreation awarded \$219,442 in small grants and additional organizational support to 43 groups in 9 beachfront communities and waterfront neighborhoods. These groups in turn leveraged our funds with \$454,990 in cash and in-kind support from local government and businesses and more than 8,800 volunteer hours to support 107 free concerts, fitness boot-camps, beach festivals, sand raking demonstrations and sand sculpting competitions.

Late last year the Baker/Polito Administration cut \$98 million from the budget, including all funds to support free events and programs on the metropolitan beaches in Eastie, Lynn, Nahant, Revere, Winthrop, South Boston, Dorchester, Quincy and Hull this summer. Consequently, all of the grants for the Better Beaches Program in 2017 come from the proceeds of the Harpoon Shamrock Splash, where 250 brave souls jumped into the cold waters of M Street Beach in South Boston in March to raise money for free programs on their beach.

"In May the House and the Senate restored funding for this program for FY2018," said Save the Harbor/Save the Bay's President Patty Foley. "I urge the Governor fully fund Metropolitan Beaches line item in the budget, and to make the funds available as soon as possible, so we can continue to invest in these free programs, which are so important to the region's kids and families."