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Pictured above are Red Bank Regional students participating in the Head of the Navesink Regatta held this fall. The students are (pictured left to right) Sean Murphy, Little Silver, Joe Zona, Shrewsbury, and the Red Bank residents: David Clark, Salvador Tecalero (back row) Josue Picado, Eric Sibrian, and Zakiyyah Godsey. The RBR Red Bank borough residents were introduced to the program through the Navesink River Rowing Club's community outreach R.O.A.R. program.

Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 25, 2010

R.O.A.R. Outreach Program Brings the Beauty and Benefits of the River to Red Bank Youth

Little Silver: "When you are out on the water you feel so calm," comments Eric Sibrian, a Red Bank Regional (RBR) student from Red Bank. Less than a year ago, Eric never dreamed he would be on the river in his home town racing in a boat alongside his fellow students as part of the Navesink River Rowing (NRR) youth team. Nor could he, or his fellow RBR students and neighbors Salvador Tecalero and Josue Picado, have imagined themselves in the middle of the beautiful Schuylkill River on a gorgeous October day. There they confidently crewed past the colorful, vintage Boat House Row alongside competing teams from various schools in the region while their families and friends cheered from the river's banks.

The boys, who also play soccer for RBR, are enamored by the Reach Out and Row (R.O.A.R.) program that local non-profit, Navesink River Rowing, sponsors and are willing to put in the extra time to practice and compete. Josue, the most diminutive of the R.O.A.R. students, is also the most energetic. According to his mentor and Red Bank Community Youth patron David Prown, Josue has set an example for his teammates with his hard work and dedication to the sport.

David Prown states, "The other kids would see Josue working hard in the weight room after school, building his endurance. He was able to make the traveling club in his first year. The other kids thought, 'If he could do it, so could we.'"

Two other young Red Bank residents David Clark and Zakiyyah Godsey also enjoy club membership and make the 6 am weekend and Wednesday after-school practices requirement of the NRR youth team. Zakiyyah is a young lady with great aspirations. She wants to be a heart surgeon. She believes her commitment to crewing will help her gain entrance into a good college and maybe even a scholarship. All five of these students were recruited for the NRR Reach Out and Row (R.O.A.R.) by David Prown. David believes that rowing presents a wonderful opportunity for young people since it helps develop confidence, team-building and socialization skills as well as healthy minds and bodies.

Zakiyyah's mother Barbara Godsey comments, "David knows how dedicated Zakiyyah is and that she gives everything her all. So he brought this opportunity to her." She adds, "I think this is a beautiful program. I know about the sport from the Olympics, but did not realize we had crewing right here in Red Bank."

And that is precisely why the program was founded by NRR members. NRR is a non-profit organization formed to bring the joy and benefits of rowing to people in Monmouth County by providing access to the pristine Navesink River. It is member run, organized, and funded; all members are required to provide 10 volunteer hours per season toward the maintenance and running of the club. When members pay their membership dues, they are

asked to donate toward the R.O.A.R. program which funds grants for the hometown youth who would not otherwise have that opportunity.

NRR president Kay Vilardi explains, “We ask our members to donate \$25, but many are much more generous.” She adds, “Our operation exists in Red Bank because of the generosity of other community partners as well. Since we arrived in Red Bank from Fair Haven in 2001, we have found river access and a place to store our equipment as a result of these partnerships, first with K Hovnanian Enterprises, then with the Salvation Army and now with the Atrium at Navesink Harbor. After we had been here for a short time, we made the realization that our youth programs, which were attracting kids from all over Monmouth County, had very few Red Bank youth in them. These kids just didn’t have any access to the river. Some didn’t even know the river was here. As a non-profit which had established a home in Red Bank via community partnerships and with the encouragement of the Borough, we felt compelled to return that generosity and make our programs more accessible to the wonderful kids in Red Bank.”

NRR has an excellent working relationship with the Red Bank Parks and Recreation Department. Each summer the two partner to present Red Bank Rec Day - an introduction to the sport of rowing for the borough’s seventh and eighth graders. This winter, the Parks and Recreation director Memone Crystian, the NRR Board and David Prown intend to meet to further develop the program.

In its third year, the R.O.A.R. program has enjoyed slow but steady growth. So far, approximately 10 teenagers have participated in NRR’s summer programs, which begin with a 2-week novice program teaching the basics of sculling. Youth who complete that program can then advance to a 2-week intermediate program where students develop boat feel and started to move together as a team. A seven-week advanced youth program is also available to youth who completed intermediate sessions the previous year. It emphasizes teamwork and advanced drilling, with a lots of rowing and skill practice time on the water.

Youth at the intermediate level or above are eligible to compete for a seat in NRR’s fall and/or spring competitive youth crews, first at the practice or “home” team level and, eventually as part of the traveling team. This requires a stringent commitment on the part of rowers. Participants and their families sign a contract where the students promised to maintain 100% attendance at practices and races.

Seven R.O.A.R. participants actually made the competitive youth team this fall. Two left the team due to other commitments. This year, the travel team competed in three regional regattas, which all took place in Pennsylvania on the Schuylkill River. Additionally, for the first time the club introduced its own local regatta, the Head of the Navesink. There, four R.O.A.R. students shined, rowing in a 4-seat boat known as a quad and coming in second in the boy’s race.

NRR youth coach and member Linda Ensor comments, “All of the R.O.A.R kids on the team have grown tremendously from when they first started. They grew in confidence and as a team. And now they have formed a great camaraderie with all the other kids. Three have made the travel team and I think the others will also graduate to the travel team in the spring.” She adds, “We will continue to expand R.O.A.R. There is a perception of rowing being an elite sport; but its not. It is for everyone.”

NRR currently maintains a membership of 275 members ranging in age from 14 to 80 years old. Just over 100 of its members are young people and approximately 60 of those are on the home or travel teams. Over the years, several of its youth members have gained scholarships to prestigious universities including Notre Dame, Duke, and the University of Pennsylvania. One former member and coach, Stacey Rippetoe is now the head coach for women’s rowing at Boston University. Membership is open to all Monmouth County residents age 14 and older. For information on the program visit the NRR website at www.navesinkrowing.com.

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(Left) Sporting medals for their second place finish in the Head of the Navesink Regatta held in October are RBR students and Red Bank residents, (left to right), Eric Sibrian, Salvador Tecalero, Josue Picado, and David Clark. (Right) RBR student and resident Zakiyyah Godsey rows out on the Navesink. All five students were granted the opportunity to participate in the Navesink River Rowing Youth Program through the group’s R.O.A.R.



community outreach program for Red Bank Borough youth.