New Sailing Program will Benefit Community; Brighten Harbor

By next fall, Norfolk's waterfront will feature a lively group of small sailing ships - sporting colorful sails and youngsters learning much more than how to tie a knot or read a chart. Patterned after successful Community Sailing Centers in other east coast cities, the goal of Sail Nauticus is to chart a brighter future for its participants.

Sail Nauticus is designed to:
- Develop leadership in Hampton Roads' youth through sailing education.
- Offer academic credit-bearing programs and internships for academically and financially at-risk students.
- Partner with public schools and community organizations in order to help teach credit-bearing courses in mathematics, science, physical education and team building, technology, and engineering.
- Expose students to the potential of careers related to the port, the military, and local industries.
- The sailing program is the latest effort by Nauticus to take advantage of its waterfront location by creating a new community resource.

Inspired by a challenge from a former Norfolk police chief, Nauticus Executive Director Hank Lynch hopes Sail Nauticus can be a tool to help prevent at-risk children from entering the juvenile justice system. Lynch believes that the program will provide a unique opportunity for practical, experiential education currently not available to area middle and high school students. Boston, New York, Baltimore, Savannah and Charleston all have one or more sailing centers which are used for education as well. Recreation. Lynch and his staff have extensively researched these other programs to find what will work best for Norfolk.

The Sail Nauticus Community Center will feature Harbor 20 sailboats, fixed keel boats with small motors, which can be safely maneuvered out of the active shipping lanes and into more recreational areas of the river and bay. This past summer, Nauticus partnered with the Elizabeth River Project, creating a day-long summer camp which included experiences on the schooner Virginia and the Learning Barge. Nauticus plans to partner with numerous other organizations including the Virginia Public Schools, Tidewater Community College's SMART program, Horizons Hampton Roads, and the Virginia Ship Repair Association, to name a few.

Philanthropist Jane Batten has pledged a charitable gift of $1.5 million to support operations and programming for Sail Nauticus. The gift includes scholarship funding for a year-round after-school program for students with a demonstrated financial need. Her gift requires a dollar for dollar match, and to date over $1 million has been raised for boats, piers, docks and other capital projects. Nauticus has moved staff out of an existing space to create a classroom.

The sail center will be open to the general public after 5 p.m. on week- days and all day on weekends.

The sailing center is the most recent in a year-long effort by the Nauticus staff to focus, fine-tune and freshen both interior and exterior space. Most of it has been done in-house by staff and volunteers.

Thanks to partnerships, Nauticus has increased programming on the Battleship Wisconsin, offering the Virginia Stage Company's World War II-era Swing Time Salute, and encouraging scout overnights and below-deck battleship tours. Staff and volunteers also completely revamped entrance to third floor to emphasize Norfolk's navy and port heritage. Nauticus is adjacent to Town Point Park on Waterside Drive.
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