



Youth Sailing Foundation

The mission of the Youth Sailing Foundation of Indian River County (YSF) is to provide Indian River County with educational, recreation and competitive sailing programs for all ages in a fun and safe environment. There are 130 children, grades 4-12 receiving free instruction. In addition, 20 special needs sailors, ages 13-70 learn to sail with highly trained instructors utilizing specially designed sailboats. 45% of the sailors come from underserved homes as defined by the ALICE guidelines.

The Youth Sailing Foundation has partnered with the Homeless Children's Foundation of Indian River County to develop the *Homeless Children Sail for Life* program, which is funded by an Impact 100 Grant. The program kicked off in the fall of 2022 with 10 homeless children paired with 6 other sailors in, 12-foot boats, 2 sailors per boat, sailing twice a week. YSF provides transportation to/from the program, healthy snacks and all required safety equipment.

The program kicked off with a review of the fundamentals: fun, effort, respect, student voice, and inclusion. Sailors provide examples under each category to develop a 'Crew Code' that is reinforced over the 10-week term. A rigging session followed on the Feva sailboats to start the process of familiarizing the sailors with all the 'strings and things' on the boat and the nautical terminology associated with each. Stu Keiller, Executive Director reported, "I personally observed many of the sessions and can report the Impact 100 sailors from HCF were totally engaged, extremely well behaved, and a pleasure for our team to work with".

Sailing requires focus, concentration and intuitive problem-solving in a fun and healthy environment that takes children out of the digital world and into the world of wind and waves. Sailing builds confidence and raises self-esteem. Lessons learned on the water are brought ashore and serve as the building blocks for a successful life.

Friendships have been built between children of different socio-economic backgrounds. Homeless sailors, Iah and Moses are inseparable from Jonas and Landon, from a family with considerable resources. Impact 100 instructor Clark Lewis reports: "They have a blast playing together." "The wind, water and waves are a great 'unifier' as one kid does not have any advantage over the other when interacting with Mother Nature"

We are very pleased with the results of the first term and will build on that success in Winter/Spring 2023. Seven of the ten sailors who participated in the fall will return. Two of them have exhibited the skills to **advance** to our intermediate adventure sailing program. Adventure sailing focuses on seamanship, navigation, teamwork and fun on the water. Rather than sailing a closed course around buoy marks, the sailors venture out onto the Lagoon cruising longer distances and going to waste islands for trash pick-up and fun.

Working with the Homeless Children's Foundation we have recruited six new sailors for a total of thirteen on the winter/spring roster. While our nominal capacity for the class is twelve, we know from experience that there will likely be one or two absentees on any given day. We continue to sail twice per week.

We could not have launched Homeless Children Sail for Life without the generosity of Impact 100. Thank you for all you do for the community and for making a difference in the lives of young vulnerable homeless children.