



Mobility Cup 2007, Aug. 28th to Sept. 1st in Halifax

An international regatta for people with significant physical disabilities will sail into Halifax in 2007.

The Mobility Cup regatta is North America's flagship for sailors with physical disabilities. The event was first hosted in 1991 and has been growing ever since as it travelled across Canada – but this will be its first appearance in Atlantic Canada.

Mobility Cup 2007 will be run by Sail Able Nova Scotia and hosted at the Dartmouth Yacht Club. It will run from Aug. 28 to Sept. 1, to include one day's training and four of racing. Sailing will be on the Bedford Basin, a sheltered body of water two miles wide and five miles long – where the WWII Atlantic convoys would gather.

“Mobility Cup 2007 will give a huge boost to the profile of disabled sailing in Halifax and the Maritimes,” said honorary chairman Paul Tingley, of Sail Able Nova Scotia. “Our goal is to purchase some Martin 16 adaptive sailboats so that we attract more disabled sailors.

“We have the highest percentage of disabled people in the country and we want to provide them with a new recreational activity not dependant on their disability. It is sailing for all, and we want to get some Sip ‘n’ Puff technology here, too.

“Also Mobility Cup will help us to find new and lasting partnerships with people and organizations within the sailing community. And it will give another excuse to go sailing and have a good time!”

Sailing provides a unique sporting opportunity for people with disabilities, as participants are not segregated by the nature of their disability – the only divisions are according to sailing experience.

This is possible because of a new breed of sailboat, designed specifically for the needs of people with disabilities. The Canadian-designed Martin 16 sloop allows joystick control, and high-level quadriplegics sail using mouth-operated Sip ‘n’ Puff interfaces connected to power assisted steering.

Mobility Cup was launched by Sam Sullivan, a high-level quadriplegic, who is currently mayor of Vancouver, BC, in order to promote his then fledgling adaptive sailing program on the West Coast. He founded the Disabled Sailing Association of British Columbia in 1989.

“We had the idea for the Mobility Cup right at the beginning, around 1989 or 1990,” explained Sullivan. “It was important to have people come together and celebrate their achievements, and to do that in the form of a race.”

The first Mobility Cup was held in Vancouver in August 1991, and it was immediately clear this could be a vehicle for spreading the word about adaptive sailing – raising the level of competition while promoting the sport to the wider community.

The event has grown a little each of the subsequent years. The 2006 event was back in Vancouver in September after a seven-year absence, when it took on a truly international significance with six countries represented: Canada, USA, Australia, New Zealand, Hungary and England.

Over the years, the event has been the catalyst for advances in the sport – from the world's first sailboat Sip ‘n’ Puff system, which debuted at Mobility Cup 1993, to the 1995 commissioning of the Martin 16.

Each year's event leaves a legacy for its host community – 2006's was the creation of AbleSailNetwork (ASN), a Canada-wide association of operators of accessible sailing programs committed to promote and develop the sport/recreation of accessible sailing, and exchange best practices.

One of ASN's duties includes responsibility for Mobility Cups, which included appointing Halifax as the next venue.

ASN chairman Rene Dallaire said the whole organization was excited at the opportunities that would arise from hosting such a prestigious event in Nova Scotia, as it perfectly fitted the Mobility Cup mandate of reaching out to new locations and leaving a legacy.

"It's exciting to be taking this event to a new location," he said. "We feel that there is a lot of expertise that the ASN, and from other people involved in disabled sailing programs over the years, that we can offer to the organizers in Halifax. They won't be doing things on their own.

"There is a good group of people in Halifax. They have an adaptive sailing program, Sail Able Nova Scotia, which has been running since the mid-1980s, and they have found a great host for the Mobility Cup in Dartmouth.

"It's an exciting opportunity to add some extra life to the program running there. We are very enthusiastic about using this to generate more adaptive sailing programs throughout the Atlantic region."

More information:

The Halifax bid in full: <http://sailable.ca/mobcup.htm>

AbleSailNetwork: <http://www.ablesailnetwork.ca/>

Mobility Cup 2006: <http://www.mobilitycup.org/>

Matthew Wild

Communications Coordinator

The Disability Foundation

Telephone: 604-688-6464 ext. 110

Toll-free: 1-877-688-8762

Email: matthew@disabilityfoundation.org

Web: www.disabilityfoundation.org