



at rocking the boat, kids don't just build boats, boats build kids

Rocking the Boat empowers young people from the South Bronx to develop self confidence, set ambitious goals, and gain the skills necessary to achieve them. Students work together to build wooden boats, learn to row and sail, and restore local urban waterways, revitalizing their community while creating better lives for themselves.

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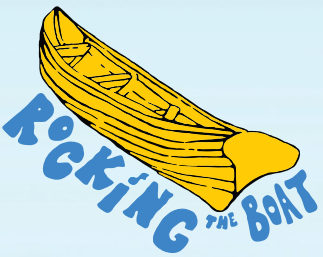


I am so thankful to have Rocking the Boat in my life. It has made me a better person. It has given me people I can trust and talk to. I love when I'm out in the middle of the East River on a boat because I get to think about everything that's happening in my life. If I'm having issues at home or in school, I get to think about what I can do to help myself. 'Port. Starboard. Hold water. Forward row.' These rowing commands tell me when and where to row. They give me direction. Not only when I'm rowing, but in my life as well.

Emily Martinez, former On-Water student, Environmental Apprentice, and Program Assistant

I first joined Rocking the Boat because being able to build boats is really different from a regular afterschool program where all you do is homework. I got to do something out of the ordinary. Now when I'm in the shop I feel like I can let out that inner woman who wants to build. That's where my passion for carpentry shows—working the wood, figuring out how the grain goes together, that's what I need.

Taji Riley, former Boatbuilding student, Boatbuilding Apprentice, and Program Assistant





our tools

wooden boatbuilding

Participants may arrive at Rocking the Boat not knowing how to read a ruler and having never used tools, but they work together to build full size traditional wooden rowing and sailing boats from scratch. Boatbuilding students and apprentices study the plans and create and assemble all of the components from stem to stern, fasten the planks and frames, paint, and then launch their boat into the Bronx River.

rowing

Students board hand-built boats and learn to row, read maps, chart a course, and follow all the rules to safely travel on the water. Rowing drills and both short and long distance trips sharpen these skills and increase students' and apprentices' capacity to work as a team, think critically, and problem solve. Being able to captain a boat is a great way to show leadership, become physically fit, and connect with nature in ways impossible to experience from shore.

sailing

Young people go from never having been on a boat before to sailing solo and becoming certified U.S. Sailing Level 1 small boat instructors. Novice sailors learn theory, practice navigation techniques, and gain experience on Rocking the Boat's fleet of traditional wooden sailboats, modern fiberglass training dinghies, and safety powerboats.

bronx river restoration

Using scientific instruments, following detailed protocols, and working alongside environmental professionals, students and apprentices collect water quality data, monitor birds and fish, reintroduce native plant and animal species, and perform restoration work that is helping to bring the Bronx River back to life after years of neglect.



our approaches

youth development

Rocking the Boat engages over 200 teens per year in a series of STEM-based programs that last throughout their high school careers and into college. Participants enter as freshmen and sophomores and choose from one of three programs: Boatbuilding, Environmental Science, or Sailing. They move from being students to paid apprentices to alumni once they graduate high school, at which point they are eligible to work part-time for Rocking the Boat as Program Assistants.

All participants receive wrap-around social services provided by three licensed social workers and a post-secondary opportunity advisor. Together they offer participants comprehensive social and emotional support, and help them graduate from high school, apply to college or trade school, overcome obstacles to attaining a college degree or professional certification, and map out a path for reaching their long-term goals.

public programs

On-Water Classroom exposes elementary, middle, and high school students to the rewards of woodworking, the joy of rowing and sailing, and the beauty and ecological diversity of the Bronx River. During the summertime, Bronx River Camp and Sailing Camp introduce middle school students to the activities of rowing and sailing, and allow them to explore their local natural environment.

Community Rowing, Sailing, and Birding invites the general public to go for a row or sail or birdwatch on Saturday afternoons from Memorial Day to Labor Day, and volunteer projects bring groups of adults up to the Bronx to support Rocking the Boat's work, and provide outstanding teambuilding opportunities.

youth development

sailing

The Sailing Program uniquely serves its South Bronx community, where virtually no familiarity with sailing existed before, by exposing sailing to students as early as middle school and engaging them in an intensive afterschool program during their high school years in which they become proficient sailors capable of teaching sailing to others. Generally, students who enter the program have never been in a boat and often don't know how to swim. Over the course of four years they learn not just to swim and to sail, but to teach sailing to others, while working toward receiving an internationally recognized U.S. Sailing instructor certification. In 2018 the program received U.S. Sailing Community Sailing Center status, one of only 40 such sites in the country meeting the highest standards. The Sailing Program's apprentices teach the summer Sailing Camp, help run Community Sailing days, and are exposed to maritime career possibilities they may never have considered.





“My first time on a week-long sailing trip as a Program Assistant is a memory I will not forget. Out on the Long Island Sound, I was astonished by how quickly the students picked up on the basics of sailing. Within two days they were able to sail a boat by themselves. It was in that moment I felt a sense of accomplishment. I successfully taught my students something I love to do.”

- **Marcus Caceres**, former On-Water student, Environmental Job Skills apprentice, and Program Assistant



partners

Rocking the Boat is grateful to the following partners who allow sailing to be such a powerful experience for our students and the larger Hunts Point community:

America's Cup Endeavour Programme
Hudson River Community Sailing
Morris Yacht and Beach Club

SUNY Maritime College
ONE° 15 Brooklyn Marina
Town of Greenwich, CT Byram Marina

United States Sailing Association
Yacht Racing Association of Long Island Sound

youth development

boatbuilding

Participants may arrive at Rocking the Boat not knowing how to read a ruler and having never used tools, but they work together to build full size traditional wooden rowing and sailing boats from scratch. Boatbuilding students and apprentices study the plans and create and assemble all of the components from stem to stern, fasten the planks and frames, paint, and then launch their boat into the Bronx River.

Rocking the Boat purposely chooses boat designs that have historically been built and used by New Yorkers as a way of connecting participants to the City's maritime past.





student projects

whitehall

Throughout the 2019-2020 school year, a group of 16 Boatbuilding students will work to construct a 17-foot Whitehall, the classic rowboat design that comprises the majority of Rocking the Boat's fleet.

oars

Students fashion four ash oars for every Rocking the Boat boat. They use block planes and spoke shaves to remove layer after layer of wood, taking a four-sided block down to an octagonal shaft then to a hexadecagon (16-sided polygon) and ultimately to a smooth rounded column with a ½ inch thick blade at one end and a leathered grip on the other.

apprentice projects

spurling skiff

Apprentices' most recent project was a meticulously rendered replica, the first of its kind, from a vintage rowboat designed in Maine. The Spurling skiff project was ideally suited to the Job Skills Program, where youth develop more advanced carpentry skills in traditional wooden boatbuilding methods with a greater degree self-direction and independence. The project started with a dilapidated original skiff that was painstakingly measured and then the pieces

dismantled. By taking it apart, the apprentices were able to study its traditional construction and then replicated that to precision in their new construction. The project also preserved for posterity the beloved design of a celebrated boatbuilder. Before this project, the only existing table of offsets for this type of Arthur "Chummy" Spurling skiff was a guess. No exact measurements had ever been taken off an existing boat. The benefit to the historical and preservation communities is not actually Rocking the Boat's finished craft, no matter how elegant, but instead the measurements taken by these students, the table of offsets they created from them, that now faithfully and forever record for the first time, the dimensions of this historic design. The apprentices are proud that the rowboat will return to its home isles in Maine where the style originated, to be used by Little Cranberry Island Yacht Club summer campers.

american star

In keeping with Rocking the Boat tradition, Boatbuilding apprentices are taking on an exciting new project: a faithful copy of the 27' Whitehall rowing gig American Star, the winner of a famous rowing race in New York Harbor that launched competitive rowing as a sport in this country. Built in Brooklyn in 1824, American Star was given as a gift to Revolutionary War commander the Marquis de Lafayette upon his farewell tour of the U.S. The original is still housed at Lafayette's home at the Château de la Grange-Bléneau in north-central France. The project will be completed in good time to participate in the boat's bicentennial celebration in 2024.

"I first joined Rocking the Boat because being able to build boats is really different from a regular afterschool program where all you do is homework. I got to do something out of the ordinary. Now when I'm in the shop I feel like I can let out that inner woman who wants to build. That's where my passion for carpentry shows--working the wood, figuring out how the grain goes together, that's what I need."

- **Taji Riley**, former Boatbuilding student, Boatbuilding apprentice, and Program Assistant



partners

Rocking the Boat is grateful to the following partners who allow the Boatbuilding Program to be such a powerful experience for our students and Apprentices:

Herreshoff Marine Museum
Independence Seaport Museum
International Yacht Restoration School
Landing School of Boat Building and Design

Mystic Seaport
Non-Traditional Employment for Women
Portside New York
RE-CO Brooklyn

South Street Seaport Museum
Stevens Institute of Technology
Teaching with Small Boats Alliance
WoodenBoat Magazine

youth development

environmental

Using scientific instruments, following detailed protocols, and working alongside environmental professionals, students and apprentices collect water quality data, monitor birds and fish, reintroduce native plant and animal species, and perform restoration work that is helping to bring the Bronx River back to life after years of neglect.





student and apprentice highlights

bacteria monitoring

Key players in a project that started in summer, 2014, apprentices are monitoring *Enterococcus* bacteria levels (*Enterococcus* is a bacteria uniquely found in human sewage). They collected samples from two different sites once a week for eight consecutive weeks, then analyzed them in their own lab outfitted with special equipment. Results showed that the presence of pathogen indicators is astronomically high after rain events, but decreases dramatically after dry periods. Through this project it was also discovered that an outflow pipe on the border of Westchester County is dumping raw sewage into the Bronx River.

wetland management

Rocking the Boat youth shoulder responsibility for maintaining three different wetlands in the estuary section of the Bronx River. In one instance, in work modelled after a successful project in Newtown Creek in Brooklyn, participants designed, built, and are monitoring planter boxes that resemble tiny tidal wetlands of substrate and native grasses. The boxes have been hung from the concrete bulkheads and built up shorelines of the Bronx River, and are

naturally cleaning the water where no habitat can otherwise grow. Seasonally at the Waterwash ABC site, teenage apprentices lead groups of adult volunteers in clearing out relentless invasive species so that native grasses and other vegetation (planted years ago by past classes of apprentices) can continue to grow and serve their critical water filtering function. The third site where apprentices take on regular monitoring and maintenance is the Soundview salt marsh—restored in 2014 by the City and State of New York, Army Corps of Engineers, and neighborhood groups. Their work is ensuring regained biological diversity, ecological productivity, and the capacity of natural processes to enhance environmental quality.

microplastics

Microplastics are particularized and degraded bits of plastic material increasingly found in waterbodies of all kinds. While indications are that a significant level of microplastic is present in the Bronx River, no formal study has ever been conducted; Rocking the Boat has begun a pilot project to do it first. Apprentices have been testing the water specifically for microplastics, establishing and monitoring a baseline. Their data, plus an analysis of the types and sources of the plastic debris, will inform efforts to raise awareness in the community around plastic use and disposal and promote alternative choices that are clearly needed.

“Rocking the Boat is always teaching me something new. This experience has made me feel capable, and given me a sense of responsibility to my work and to myself.”

- **Rigoberto Garcia**, former On-Water student and Environmental Job Skills apprentice



partners

Rocking the Boat is grateful to the following partners who allow environmental science to be such a powerful experience for our students and the larger Hunts Point community:

Billion Oyster Project
Bridgeport Regional Aquaculture Science and Technology Education Center (BRASSTEC)
Bronx River Alliance
Clark University
Hudson River Foundation
Hudson River Sloop Clearwater

Long Island Sound Study
Waterfront Alliance
New York Botanical Garden
New York City Audubon
New York City Soil and Water Conservation District
NY/NJ Baykeeper

Rebuild by Design
Riverkeeper
Rozalia Project
Storm Water Infrastructure Matters
University of Connecticut Stamford
Wildlife Conservation Society

youth development

social work

Social Work is an essential component of Rocking the Boat's comprehensive youth development model. A four-member team supports Rocking the Boat participants from the time they join the Youth Development Program until long after they graduate from high school. They offer participants social and emotional support, and help them graduate from high school, apply to college, overcome obstacles to attaining a college degree, and map out a path for reaching their long-term goals. Services include individual counseling, referrals to outside services, advocacy at school and at home, workshops and discussion groups, professional development, and college and career guidance.





“When I came here I came with a visa. With that visa I wouldn’t be able to go to college. But Liz helped me get my green card. It’s because of her that I’m going to college.”

- **Bubacarr Fofana**, former On-Water student and Environmental Job Skills apprentice



partners

Rocking the Boat is grateful to the following partners who collaborate with the Social Work Team in support of our students and apprentices:

Bottom Line
Bronx Connect
Bronx Defenders
Career Internship Network
Center for Anti-Violence Education
City Access New York

Hunter College Silberman School of Social Work
Hunts Point Alliance for Children
Legal Aid Society
Let’s Get Ready
Montefiore Medical Center
New York City Student Success Collaborative

New York University Silver School of Social Work
Options College Counseling at the
Goddard Riverside Community Center
Planned Parenthood
Posse Foundation

public programs

community rowing, sailing, and birding

Through Community Rowing, Hunts Point residents of all ages explore the Bronx River aboard student-built wooden row boats, accompanied by staff who teach them about the local waterways. The free program takes place every Saturday from Memorial Day to Labor Day.

For four of those days, community members can also try their hand at sailing. Community Sailing aims to make sailing a staple of the South Bronx waterfront.

Community Birding brings birdwatching to the shores of the Bronx River. Identify and learn about local species with knowledgeable guides. Binoculars and field guides will be provided.





public programs

on-water classroom

Many Rocking the Boat participants' first contact with the organization is through public outreach programs and activities. On-Water Classroom Programs serve approximately 2,000 students per year from dozens of local schools, mainly engaging them in Rocking the Boat's ongoing Bronx River restoration efforts but also exposing them to everything the organization has to offer. Ranging in length from a single three-hour session to weekly sessions throughout the school year, On-Water Classroom programs augment traditional classroom learning with hands-on explorations.





“Rocking the Boat is nothing short of our own national treasure! As a teacher, administrator, parent and lifetime Bronx resident, I am proud that my students, teachers, parents, colleagues and my own daughter benefit from the preeminent, inclusive and diversified programming offered by RtB. You will not find more impactful programming anywhere and I urge all to partner and explore the Bronx River; ready, set, row!”

- **Stephen Ritz**, Founder: Green Bronx Machine

“My first day and my last day were so different. On the first day, I was scared to go on the water. Since then I’ve learned to row, how to catch fish, crabs and shrimp. It was an interesting experience for a city girl like me...I learned some important new skills. You never know when I might use these skills in the future.”

- **Elvira Quarshie**, New Settlement Apartments, Bronx Helpers Program

For more information, contact:

publicprograms@rockingtheboat.org | 347-726-9396



partners

The following New York City high schools, middle schools, and community-based organizations have sent students to the On-Water Classroom program:

Bronx Arena High School
 Brooklyn Apple Kindergarten
 Entrada Academy
 Graham Windham
 High School of Language and Innovation
 Hunts Point Alliance for Children
 Hyde Leadership Charter School
 New York Harbor School

Manhattan Academy for Language and Arts
 Manhattan Country School
 New Heights Summer Academy
 New Settlement Apartments
 New Visions Charter High School for the Humanities II
 Outward Bound Urban Explorers
 Pelham Lab School

Renaissance Charter High School
 Schomberg Satellite Academy
 St. Ignatius School
 Summer Intensive English
 Language Program-CUNY
 The Point CDC
 Ya-Ya Network

public programs

bronx river summer sailing and environmental program

Rocking the Boat provides place-based environmental education and recreational activities on the water in a community where the need for both outdoor summer programming and environmental stewardship could not be higher. Participants practice working as a team, explore the local environment as they learn how to row and sail, and discover plant and animals species in and around the river.





“On my first day I was reluctant to come because I didn’t know anyone. I don’t enjoy situations where I have to make new friends or do new things. I didn’t think I would enjoy rowing too much either. Now that it is the last day I can honestly say I am glad I came. I like my team. I liked getting to know them. Now I enjoy rowing. I’m proud because I have calluses and experience. I’m thinking of maybe coming back here, too.”

- **Ney**, eighth grade Bronx River camper

For more information, contact:

publicprograms@rockingtheboat.org | 347-726-9396



partners

The following New York City high schools, middle schools, and community-based organizations have sent students to camp:

Fannie Lou Hamer Freedom High School
Graham Windham

Hyde Leadership Charter School
Lafayette-Boynton Apartments

New Settlement Apartments
St. Ignatius School

board of directors

Manda D'Agata, Secretary

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