



THE BACK BAY SUN

S H E D D I N G N E W L I G H T O N A N O L D N E I G H B O R H O O D

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A new twist on an old pastime; Boston Model Sailing Club teaches the joys of model sailboats by Joseph Domelowicz Jr.

They come to play at the Esplanade and, with the Charles River at their backs, these men and women do consider their hobby to be a playful enterprise. But do not be fooled; There is method to their whimsy.

Boston Model Sailing Club is a program of The Esplanade Association, which owns many of the boats its members use. However, the program is not just about reliving one's youth. Rather, the model sailing that goes on at the Storrow Lagoon on an almost weekly basis during the summer is about connecting people to the Esplanade with more than concerts and jogging. It is about using and preserving the Storrow Lagoon for their its intended purpose – model boating.

“This lagoon was expressly built for pond yachting, which was a big pastime around the turn of the century,” explained BMSC volunteer coordinator Erik Bullerjahn. “This group was established in 2002 by The Esplanade Association as a way to reconnect that pastime of sailing small boats on the lagoon with the people who use the parks now.”

Bullerjahn, who has been a model sailboating volunteer for the past three years, grew up sailing, but took to model sailing as another way to enjoy his favorite sport.

“This club sails about five different classes of model sail boats, but there are twenty classes of model sailboats recognized by the American Model Yachting Association,” said Bullerjahn. “Most of the boats down here are owned by The Esplanade Association and the volunteers are in charge of maintaining and securing the boats for the association.”

The Boston Model Sailing Club has an email list of about 120 people who drop in or out of the sailing events as they wish to, but Bullerjahn said there is a hard core group of about six or seven model sailboat enthusiasts who come down just about every week.

“Typically, we spend a lot of time talking to other people who wander up to watch us sail the boats and we usually try to run a couple of races,” said Bullerjahn, who estimates that on a busy weeknight or Sunday afternoon he will personally talk to as many as 50 people who drop in to see what is going on.

“We especially have fun getting the kids involved,” said Bullerjahn. “It’s like bringing a video game to life – in fact the skills it takes to run the remote controls are very much like those used to run a computer game set.”

Anyone interested in joining the Boston Model Sailing Club or just stopping by to watch can find out about scheduled sailing days on the club's web site:
www.BostonModelSailing.com

Tracy Anderson, a newer member of the club, said she came down as a way of meeting people and has been coming back ever since,

"I'm a volunteer with Boston Cares and I heard about the club through them, so I came down one day to watch and play and I fell in love with it," said Anderson, who moved to Boston from Michigan two years ago.

"I'm always seeing these boats down here, but I didn't know what it was or that it was open to the public," said Emily Chang, a first time model boater. "It was fun. I'll definitely come back and try it again."

Unlike model sailing in New York City's Central Park, the BMSC is free of charge and open to the public, with all activities supported by The Esplanade Association and in cooperation with the Department of Conservation and Recreation.