Big Tree Boating
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www.BigTreeBoating.org

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regular updates during the sailing season!

Connect with us on Facebook and Instagram for

Tree Boating: Community Sailing Program

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call or text the BTB phone: (207) 691-0197 (June 1 - August 15) checked periodically over the winter.

Get in touch

email questions to bigtreeboating@gmail.com.

For details and more information visit: www.bigtreeboating.org or

WAYS TO SUPPORT BTB

DONATE BY MAIL:

Big Tree Boating
PO Box 273
Islesboro, ME

make checks payable to Big Tree Boating Association

DONATE ONLINE:

We accept donations via a secure PayPal Account.

www.BigTreeBoating.org/support

BTB - Board of Directors
Ben Alexander - President, George Evans - Treasurer, Bonnie MacKenzie - Secretary, Katie Wuori - Executive Sailing Director
Board: Mike Horn, Mike Mueller, Yesha Subtonic-Wee, Richard Cinsaru, Tracey Wuori, Todd Siekman, Ben Phillips

BIG TREE BOATING ASSOCIATION

Plain Sailing

Spring 2026 Volume 31

Ready for the Next Tide

Katie Wuori - Director's Report



As we reflect on the 29th season (and enter the 30th!) of Big Tree Boating, we are reminded of the program's roots: fostering a love of sailing, seamanship, and community on the waters of Penobscot Bay. Since its founding, BTB has remained committed to creating a welcoming, hands-on learning environment where sailors of all ages and abilities can build confidence, independence, and respect for the marine environment. This season carried that tradition forward with energy, growth, and (of course) a few memorable surprises.

The season began with unseasonably hot weather and light northerly breezes—an uncommon pattern for early summer in Penobscot Bay, where southwesterlies typically prevail. Along with these conditions came an abundance of jellyfish. Jellyfish blooms are typically driven by a combination of warmer water temperatures, food availability (plankton), and oceanographic conditions such as currents and salinity. Luckily, these amazing Scyphozoa family creatures kept their tentacles to themselves as they swam through Seal Harbor. Despite the "jelly fish watch" we put into effect for the swim and capsize tests, we had seventy active members this summer, many of whom brought guests to share in the BTB experience.

Our instructors were at the heart of this season's success. Caleb Read stepped into the role of Head Instructor with steady leadership, prioritizing safety, listening to the needs of both instructors and members, and ensuring that seamanship remained central to all we do. Ford Glozel kept everyone on their toes with his close-quarters skippering, sharp eye for the wind, and enthusiasm for sailing. He continues to grow into his teaching style, working hard to translate instinctive sailing skills into thoughtful instruction for his students; a challenge every strong sailor must learn to master. Ginger Anderson-Willis's connection to BTB and her deep knowledge of Mercury handling created an environment where sailors of all levels felt supported and capable. Her happy, easy-going nature with her comfort on the water creates a learning environment members have come to love. Lucy Engstrom came into her own as an instructor, developing a calm, thoughtful teaching style that resonated with students. She is not afraid to ask questions, learn deeply and share her knowledge. (continued inside: Director)

Director:
Maddie Mueller grew tremendously in confidence, particularly in racing, modeling a quiet, lead-by-example approach. Their quick smile and helpful attitude set a precedent for other members learning under their watch. Matt Britton brought unmatched enthusiasm, whether demonstrating capsize recovery or initiating an impromptu game that turned learning into pure fun. His joy of the craft of sail resonates out of him, and members cannot help but learn a thing or two when he is around. We were also fortunate to welcome back two familiar faces: Rylee Sienkiewicz returned from retirement to share her racing expertise, and Yesha Subtonic-West provided invaluable support as dock master on busy weekends, with plans to expand her role in adult sailing and navigation instruction this season. Our junior instructors: Isla Wu, Lincoln Wu, and Ellie Bigelow, rose to the occasion, embracing the responsibility of leading and supporting novice sailors. Watching them step into leadership roles is a continual reminder of the long arc of learning at BTB.
As we look ahead to our 30th season, there is much to anticipate. With a shorter, seven-week schedule due to the calendar, the summer promises to be fast-paced and full. Preparations are underway; the phone is beginning to ring, the boats and floats are in good condition, and our new building will be incorporated into the program. We also take a moment to thank and say goodbye to several dedicated board members whose contributions have helped shape BTB into what it is today: Ken Smith, Lindsey Higginson, and Phillip Ladd. Big Tree Boating wouldn't be what it is today without each of you and your (see Board Changes article for more details) 30 year dedication!
I look forward to another season of launching boats, hoisting sails, building skills, and strengthening community. Most of all, I look forward to seeing you all out on the water.

BTB is Hiring!

We have one opening for an instructor. If you are 15+, know how to sail, work well with others, and are responsible, please reach out for details. We are also looking for three junior instructors. If you are 13+, know how to sail, work well with others and are responsible, please reach out.



President's Report

As I ponder the start of our 30th summer and reflect on the past, the term "it takes a village" comes to mind in describing how our community has come together over the years to make Big Tree Boating thrive. This past fall and winter, we put the finishing touches on our new boathouse with the help of Ken Smith, Jeff Glotzl and George Evans! Special thanks to Alex and Kendra Brigham, Earl Mackenzie, Lindsay Higginson and Mike Mueller for their support in making our new home a reality. I would also like to offer a special thanks to the Lueschen Family for sharing their garage with us for so many years!

The completion of the boathouse marks the end of our second decade and as we enter our third, it feels like a new chapter of BTB is being born. With new faces joining our community of board members, volunteers, donors and sailors, the future seems bright for our little "village" and lead by our Director Katie Wuori in her 8th season, I can't wait to see what's next on the horizon.

I look forward to seeing everyone on the water in a few weeks!

Ben



Handing Over the Helm

As Big Tree Boating enters its 30th year, the program has become both a beloved community activity and a familiar sight in Seal Harbor. With this milestone comes a moment to reflect on the people whose dedication built BTB into what it is today.

BTB began with a conversation between Betsy Shirley and Bonnie MacKenzie—who has served as the board's secretary for all 30 years—about how to honor the late Mr. Shirley and his love for the ocean, small-boat sailing, and community. From that conversation, the idea for a community sailing school was born, and the first board began to take shape.

The late John Higginson served as BTB's first president and was later succeeded by his wife, Lindsey Higginson, who led the organization until five years ago. When Lindsey stepped down, longtime Vice President Ben Alexander took the helm as president, a role he continues to hold today. The Higginsons' unwavering support over the past three decades has helped BTB purchase boats, build facilities, and continually strengthen the program's safety and operations. Thank you, Lindsey, for your years of leadership, dedication, and support.



Managing the organization's finances from the beginning was Phillip Ladd, with invaluable support from his wife, Elaine Fiske. Together, they led fundraising efforts, wrote grants, and helped establish the strong financial foundation that supports BTB today. We could not have done it without them.

Merry Alderman later stepped into the treasurer role for several years, bringing organization, financial expertise, and practical know-how to the board. When she stepped down, longtime board member George Evans took over treasurer responsibilities and continues to guide BTB's financial operations today.

Every organization depends on someone willing to do whatever needs doing, and for BTB, that person has long been Ken Smith. Ken has spent countless hours repairing boats, handling paperwork and registrations, organizing donations, storing equipment, maintaining "The Shack" and the BTB float, and helping oversee the construction of our current building. From inflating trailer tires before a regatta to solving problems large and small, Ken's dedication and foresight have helped keep BTB afloat for decades.

As Ken began discussing retirement, BTB formed separate membership and fleet committees to divide the responsibilities he once handled largely on his own. Even now, it takes several people to fill the many roles he quietly managed over the years. Thank you, Ken, for everything you have done for BTB and its community.

We also extend our sincere thanks to Bonnie MacKenzie, Mike Horn, and George Evans for their continued dedication and service to the program.

An honorable mention goes to Harry Brigham, who recently completed his term on the board and is now focusing on a sailing program in New York. Though no longer serving officially, Harry remains only a phone call away and still shows up on workdays to help move boats and lend a hand. Thank you, Harry.

Finally, we are excited to welcome Ben Phillips, a former BTB instructor and program alumnus, to the board. We look forward to his insight, energy, and knowledge of the boating world as BTB sails into its next chapter.

Ken's Corner

FOR SALE:

(2) 420 sail boats - great shape, full gear: $2,000 and $5,000
(2) lasers with trailer all gear, sails in fair condition $2,000
Mini Hobie Cat Inflatable, Brand New - Great for Lake sailing $5,000
Pearson Coaster 30, built in the late 60s with a 20 HP Beta diesel engine installed in 2008. In good condition $12,500
Pearson 28, new diesel engine installed in 2012, well maintained and reliable. Roller furling genoa, mainsail in great shape, everything working and used last summer, comes with a newly installed mooring in Seal Harbor $15,000.00

All profits go directly into off-setting the cost of running BTB and paying the instructors.

All prices are negotiable.

1st Annual Penobscot Bay InterClub Regatta Racing Circuit (PBICR)

The 29th season brought a dynamic and memorable summer of racing across Penobscot Bay. Traditionally, TYC and BTB have had one annual race and every year, switching venues between Gilkey and Seal Harbor. This year was very different, a multitude of races was planned and executed.

July began with some fluky winds, but this day, the first regatta of the PBICR, a classic south–southwest breeze filled in at 10 knots, gusts a bit higher - perfect for racing. A standout moment was Tarratine Yacht Club (TYC) towing in ten 420s, creating a record turnout of 16 420s in Seal Harbor and North Haven arriving, the first time North Haven has raced on Islesboro through summer programming.

Mid-July brought fog, providing an opportunity for "sail by brail" on the water honing other senses than just sight. Rylee Sienkiewicz returned to lead 420 clinics, helping instructors and sailors refine racing tactics and boat speed. As conditions improved, sailors applied these skills while sailing around Flat Island. BTB participated in a very foggy close to shore race at TYC.

Late July delivered heavy winds, at times reaching gale conditions, shifting the focus to safety and float-oriented programming. But, when the Camden Classic race date (the first time BTB participated) came, the racers floated around in the West Bay for a few hours, the race was finally canceled due to glassy conditions.

In early August, wildfire haze and shifting winds set the stage for racing at North Haven, where a diverse fleet: 420s, Lasers, and North Haven dinghies, shared the starting line. It was a fantastically fun day, where every sailor pushed boundaries through healing a bit more, inter-club crews, or experiencing a new boat they had never sailed on before.

New Developments from a Salty Soul

This summer, alumni instructor Yesha Subtonic-West, will be returning to help expand seamanship instruction and share her knowledge through Skipper 2 and Adult Mix & Mingle classes, bringing even more opportunities for sailors to grow their sea sense, confidence, and expand their knowledge of the water.



(PBICR, cont.)

The season closed with a mix of thunderstorms and ideal sailing conditions. Post-season, Ford, Lucy, Wes, and Holden carried BTB's momentum to the Red Jacket Regatta in Rockland.

Overall, the season highlighted strong participation, skill development, and the continued growth of the interclub racing community. Look for updates on the 2nd annual PBICR on our facebook and instagram posts

Thank You!

PYY: Launching, hauling mercury and taking such good care of Betsy

IME: Launching hauling inflatable and whalers, keeping the floats and moorings up to par

David Leuschen: The continuing support for BTB programming and the storage space.

Alex and Kendra Brigham: for the lease of the corner of their property for the storage building and boat storage

Harry Brigham: supporting the program by moving boats and sharing his knowledge of sailing schools

Greg: Moving the mercury's to and from PYY

Rich Grisaru: his countless hours and expertise of designing the new BTB building

Jeff Glotzel: Finishing the inside of the new building

George Evans: Helping Jeff and many other odd jobs that he does behind the scenes to keep the program running.

Mike Mueller: The literal "engine that kept the BTB racers moving" with a happy and helpful attitude. We couldn't have made it to all of the PBIC regattas without you and your boat.

Spring/Fall 2025 ICS Sailing Team Updates - ICS Wins State Champs!

Spring Sailing '25 - State Championships were held at Maine Maritime Academy in Castine. ICS competed with 6 strong sailors Skipper Alma Bewsher, Eloise Mooney, and Ford Gotzel, Crewed by Sophia Skrivanich, Roise Brimley and Caleb Reed. The wind was up and so was the competition, but with tremendous teamwork and a little luck, ICS held the victory. Congratulations all around!

Fall Sailing '25 - Sophia Skrivanich and Eloise Mooney continued sailing on Mondays and Thursdays at the Apprentice Shop. The highlight of the season was the race in the Becton Cup at MMA and placed third out of 18 boats from 11 different schools, holding first place until the last race. It was neck and neck, and Camden pulled out with the victory at the end.

Spring '26: We started to rig boats on March 27th and hit the water by April 1st. This tightly knit group, composed of four dedicated sailors: two seniors, Caleb Read (BTB instructor) and Sophia Skrivanich and two juniors, Ford Glotzl (BTB instructor) and Eloise Mooney, placed 2nd at the State Championship on May 17th at MMA. The Apprenticeship, the sailing program based in Rockland, has grown this year; they have practice for High School Teams on Mondays, Thursdays, and Racing Fridays. On Saturdays, we travel to regattas. The ICS Sailing Team would like to thank the Apprenticeship Shop and BTB for their support. Both organizations provide a place for us to sail and the equipment to do it safely.

"Get out onto the water as much as you can - That means YOU ICS students!" - Tracey Wuori, coach



Pictured(from left): Tracey Wuori (Coach), Rosie Brimley (Crew), Mike Horn (Coach), Amla Bewsher (Skipper)

For details and more information visit:

www.bigtreeboating.org or email questions to bigtreeboating@gmail.com.

Call or text the BTB phone: (207) 691-0197 (June 1 - August 15) this is checked periodically over the winter.

Registration is OPEN.

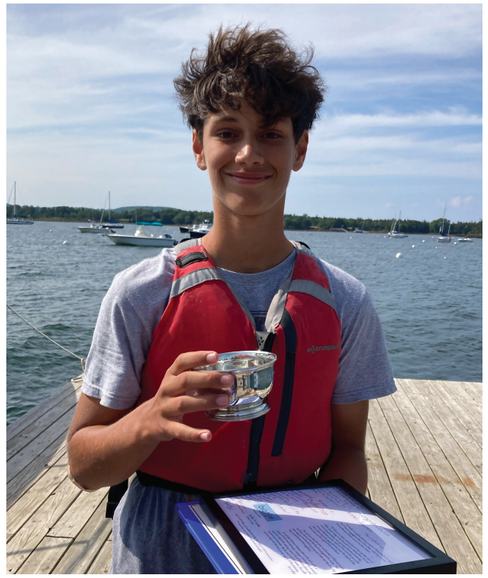
Follow the Instagram or Facebook page for Big Tree Boating, Islesboro, Maine, for program, weather updates, and other daily information (updated regularly from June 26 - August 15).

Join us Tuesday Evenings!

If you have ever spent time on the water around Islesboro, you know the 2:00 (ish) rush of wind. There are many days BTB is closing and the wind is just beginning. Tuesday evenings we stay open until 6:00 PM. These evenings offer a relaxed opportunity for recreational sailing, casual racing, and simply enjoying Penobscot Bay. Whether you are looking to skipper or crew on the fleet pick of the day, or just enjoy an evening sail with friends, Tuesday nights are a welcoming and low-pressure way to stay connected to the water and the BTB community. If the weather does not allow us to stay open late Tuesday, we will switch the extended hours to Wednesday. Please call by noon that day to let us know you would like to sail, we will close at 4:00 if there are no sailors.



Sailor of the Summer- Weston Engstrom



A good natured, thoughtful, helpful crew/skipper who has strong sailing and seamanship skills. He demonstrated sportsmanship, teamwork, and leadership. The values BTB holds high. Nice job Wes!

Work Days 2025 Thank you!

June 15th - The weather was fantastic and many hands made light work! We had a crew on the water launching dinghies and on land prepping the mercury sailboats. Wes, Lucy, Kyle Engstrom, Matt Britton, Caleb Read, Ford, Jeff, Louie Glozel, Ben and Laughlin Alexander, Sammy and Ellie Bigelow, Tracey Wuori, Maddie, Tristan and Mike Mueller, and anyone I may have forgotten. Thank you!

August 16th
Thank you to all of the people on Mosley's dock, BTB members and the instructors during the last week for hauling gear up the ramp and to the new building to store.

Upcoming work day:
Saturday, June 20 9:00 at Mosley's Dock. Wear old clothes you don't mind getting paint on or wet. If you have a vehicle with a trailer, please bring it along to move the mercury sloops to PYY for launching.

Get Back on the Water with BTB

Alumni of BTB? New to the Island and Already Know How to Sail? Come on Out for a Recreational Sail and Bring a Friend!
One of the highlights of this summer was to see so many alumni sailors return to BTB, often bringing friends along. There is something special about watching former sailors step back onto the float, reconnect with old friends and share their love of water with someone new to us. We encourage alumni, families, and friends to keep the tradition going this summer: come down to the float, bring someone along, and spend a day getting salty with us. To bring a friend, the skipper must be a member of BTB, on the membership form take a look at the last three options and choose what works best for you. If you're not sure, please reach out to Katie Wuori, Director. Everyone must fill out a medical form and sign a waiver. Members are welcome to bring a guest for a couple of days.

Get Some Swag!

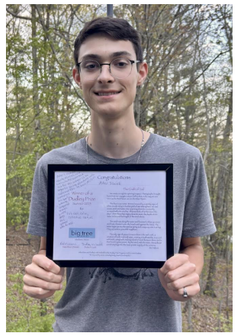
Rep BTB with fresh swag from our Bonfire store! From comfy tees and hoodies to must-have accessories, every purchase helps support what we do while letting you show your pride in style. Grab your gear today and wear the mission wherever you go!

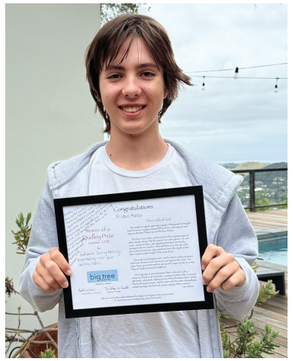
SCAN ME



Dudley Awards

Asher Siswick - calm, cool, collected nature





Tristian Mueller - confidence sailing mercuries and leaping into solo sailing lasers



Maeve Wu - Natural ability and confidence sailing

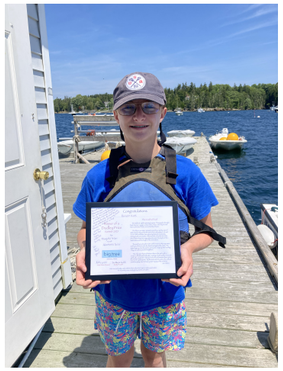
Isla Wu - being flexible and insightful teacher

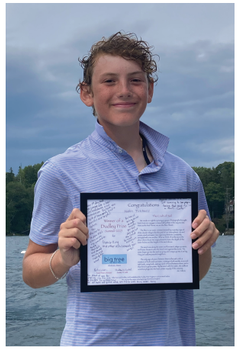




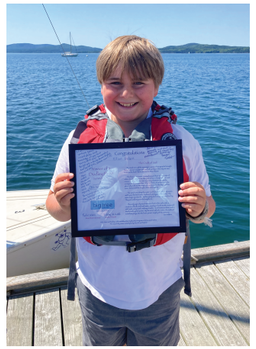
Lincoln Wu - Taking challenges with confidence

Bennet Hines - Thoughtful helper and adventurous sailor





Holden Tirschwell - Capsize King and other achievements



Eifion Nelson - Taking Chances

Ellie Bigelow - Willingness to do it All





The small but MIGHTY end of season crew!