

ORGANIZATION SPOTLIGHT

# A Good Neighbor for Rehoboth Bay



The Rehoboth Bay Sailing Association rents Sunfish like this, and also uses them for sailing lessons.

The mild temperament of Rehoboth Bay — with its placid currents and typically comfortable winds — provides Rehoboth Bay Sailing Association members with often perfect racing conditions, a reputation that has brought world-class seafarers to compete in their regattas throughout the summer. To ensure that locals have the same privilege to enjoy the waterway in their own backyard, the nonprofit Rehoboth Bay Foundation was founded three decades ago by the RBSA with two simple aims: encouraging younger generations to safely pursue maritime activities and preserving the area’s natural resources for future enjoyment.

Once every year, the foundation’s board of directors chooses charities to support, the only criteria being that they promote environmental conservation or maritime education programs. The commitment to keeping sailors safe out on the water is considered by Preston “Pal” Littleton, a part-time Rehoboth Beach resident and past board member (for 20 years), to be especially worthwhile given that he, his wife and their three children competed in local regattas. Grants distributed last year supported water safety education programs such as the Sea Scouts and the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary Flotilla 12-9. Other contributions improved safety measures at the sailing club by donating life preservers and two-way marine radios, as well as providing partial funding for sailing instructors’ certification.

Growing up in the desert Southwest, current foundation treasurer and retired racer Steve Black knows what it’s like to not have easy access to the sport: He had to travel about 40 miles to the nearest lake

**TO LEARN MORE** Further information about the Rehoboth Bay Foundation, including how to donate or get involved, can be found at [rbsa.org/rehoboth-bay-foundation](https://rbsa.org/rehoboth-bay-foundation).

to learn to sail. While distance may not be a huge obstacle locally, the Rehoboth Bay Foundation works to ensure that underprivileged children can pursue their water-related recreational interests. One recipient of the group’s annual grants is the Sussex Family YMCA, which uses the donation to provide swimming lessons for disadvantaged children. The grant awarded to the Delaware Center for the Inland Bays covers partial tuition costs for children enrolled in its youth programs, which provide hands-on environmental education at the James Farm Ecological Preserve.

While the foundation primarily raises money by collecting donations from sailing association members, another way that others can participate is by donating boating equipment — such as boat trailers and outboard motors — that the foundation can sell or lend for use at the RBSA’s boating school. When he was no longer able to navigate his Catalina 25 (named *Adventure*) through the sailing association’s shallow marina, Littleton decided to donate proceeds from the sale of his boat to the foundation, citing the satisfaction it gave him to help a cause he holds dear.

Like many nonprofits, the Rehoboth Bay Foundation faces perennial challenges, including tax code changes that have affected giving. And transportation, staffing and recruitment issues have put on hold a scholarship program intended to provide sailing lessons for underprivileged children. But the RBF continues to sail into the future with its charitable, conservation and educational missions very much in sight. ■

— Cori Burcham

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spirit, one sole at a time.

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