

# Keeping It Local: Why Regional Organizations are Key to the Health of Junior Sailing

# Overview

- About The Sailing Foundation
  - Why did they decide to get involved?
- The Foundation's "Youth Sailing Initiative" and my role as a regional director
- What we've accomplished, where we've struggled, and future plans
- Ideas that leaders can take back and use in their respective areas



# *The Sailing Foundation*

*For the advancement of sailing in the Pacific Northwest*

- Originated as an America's Cup Campaign launched by a group of Seattle area sailors in the early 1970's.
- Intrepid lost the 1974 trials by one race and was then sold -> Gave birth to the Foundation.
  - That money was invested in an endowment that was rarely tapped for 40+ years







# *The Sailing Foundation*

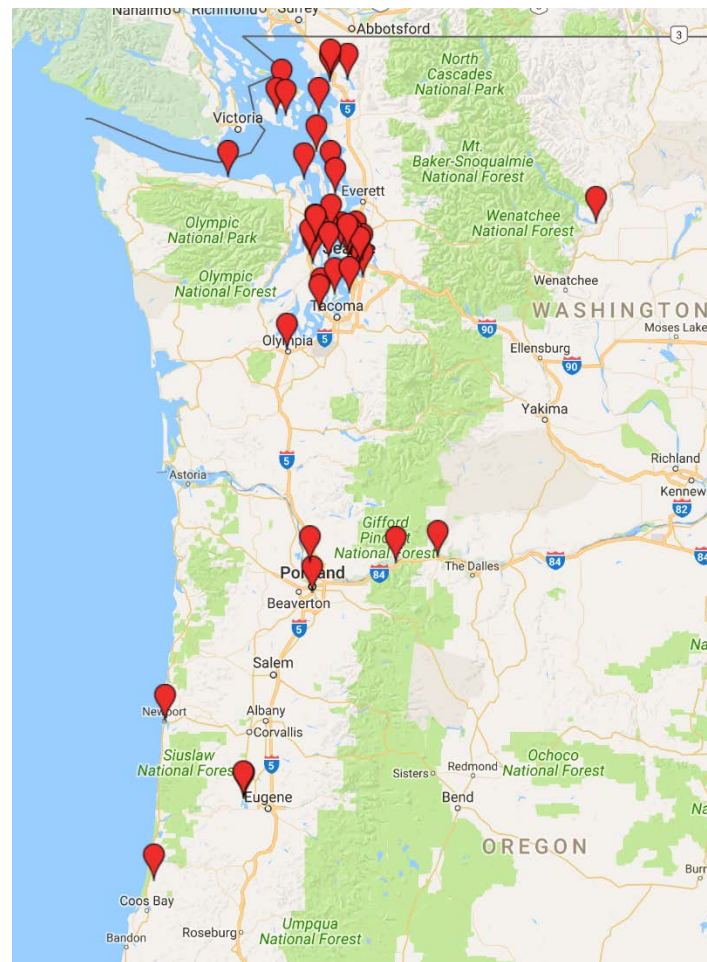
*For the advancement of sailing in the Pacific Northwest*

- Founding mission was to promote youth sailing and boating safety
- Responsible for the research and development of the Lifesling®
- One of the pioneering organizations in the development of Safety at Sea
- Independent 501(c)3 Non-Profit
  - Not a yacht club or formally affiliated with one.
  - No physical location or sailing facility



# Challenges Facing our Region

- **Geographic Isolation**
- **Lack of Sailing Infrastructure**
  - Weak Regional Organization
  - Very few professionals (Coaches/Directors)
- **Uneven distribution of sailing culture & know how in our region**
- **A Declining Youth Racing Scene**
  - Decreased Participation
  - Fewer Clubs/Programs Represented
  - Organized by mainly by parents
- **Smallest HS/College Conferences**
  - Struggle to remain relevant
  - Student/Volunteer Run





# From Idea to Reality

- **Winter 2013-14**
  - Donor approached The Sailing Foundation... “I would like to see our area do a better job at youth sailing.”
- **Spring 2014**
  - Foundation had several meetings and came back with the unique proposal to hire a full-time regional youth director.
  - Donor agrees and also purchases two Zodiac PRO 650 RIBs for the Foundation.
- **Fall 2014**
  - My position officially began
  - MAYBE not fully developed

## Job Description:

“Get more kids sailing and raise the caliber of youth racing in our region.”



# Where to Start???

- **Prioritize and Form Plan of Attack**
  - What is working well in the region?
  - What is the low hanging fruit
  - What aren't we doing or doing poorly
  - What is it that we want to actually want to accomplish?
  - AND... what can we reasonably do with our resources
- **Research...**
  - Shamelessly troll the internet for good ideas
  - Lots of great ideas from BAYS, SCYYRA, JSA Long Island Sound, Sail BC, and others.
  - What do these successful regional organizations have in common and how can adapt that to fit our needs.
- **Get to know your constituency**
  - Boots on the ground and out in the field
  - Regular meetings and communication
  - Earn trust and respect...Without those nothing is possible
  - Let them know you're here to help



# Youth Sailing Initiative Key Components

(...What we do)

- **Racing- Emphasis on Quality Local Racing Opportunities**
  - Guest Coaching
  - Regatta Coaching and Support
  - Regatta Management... esp. bigger events
  - Travel Grants for HS/College Teams
  - Clinics
- **Outreach- Emphasis on Building New Sailors**
  - Scholarship Program (Any child who qualifies for Free/Reduced Lunch)
  - Regional Events (Open House/Seattle Boat Show)
  - Learn to Sail Directory
  - Fleet Building Grants
  - Development of new programs
- **Organization- Emphasis on Communication and Infrastructure**
  - Scheduling
  - Regional Liaison/Central Conduit
  - [www.nwyouthsailing.org](http://www.nwyouthsailing.org)
- **Training- Emphasis on Leveraging Expertise and Passing it Along**
  - US Sailing Instructor Training Courses
  - Mentoring Area Coaches/Instructors
  - Staff Training Days
  - Annual Coaches' Clinic (Mini NSPS)





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NATIONAL SAILING PROGRAMS  
SYMPOSIUM 2017

AUSTIN, TEXAS





## Sailing Programs

### Learn to Sail

Like other youth sports and activities sailing is meant to be fun, empowering, and social. Sailing offers a unique medium to teach more than just practical skills. Sailing can offer calm moments of feeling connected to nature, along with excitement and adventure. Adversity and challenges along the way provide many opportunities for personal growth and team work.

Sailing is easy to learn, but hard to master. Indeed people have spent their whole lives trying to master it, or branching out into related activities like kite boarding or windsurfing. Sailing is as much a lifestyle as it is a sport, one which you will be able to enjoy for your whole life or with your entire family. Your child might decide they want to be an Olympic sailor, or they may be content using their knowledge for cruising around Puget Sound. The skills learned in a small sailboat are transferable to all other forms of sail powered craft. Often the greatest reward in sailing are the intangible lessons it teaches you about yourself.

### Where to Sail

There are about fifty different organizations that teach small boat sailing classes in Washington and Oregon. Sailing classes are taught by a variety of different organizations. Some are entirely volunteer based, while others employ year-round professional staff. Historically yacht clubs were the hub of youth sailing activities. That's shifting however with community based sailing programs now being offered through parks and rec departments, local independent sailing centers, or as extensions of larger non-profits.

### Community Sailing vs. Yacht Clubs

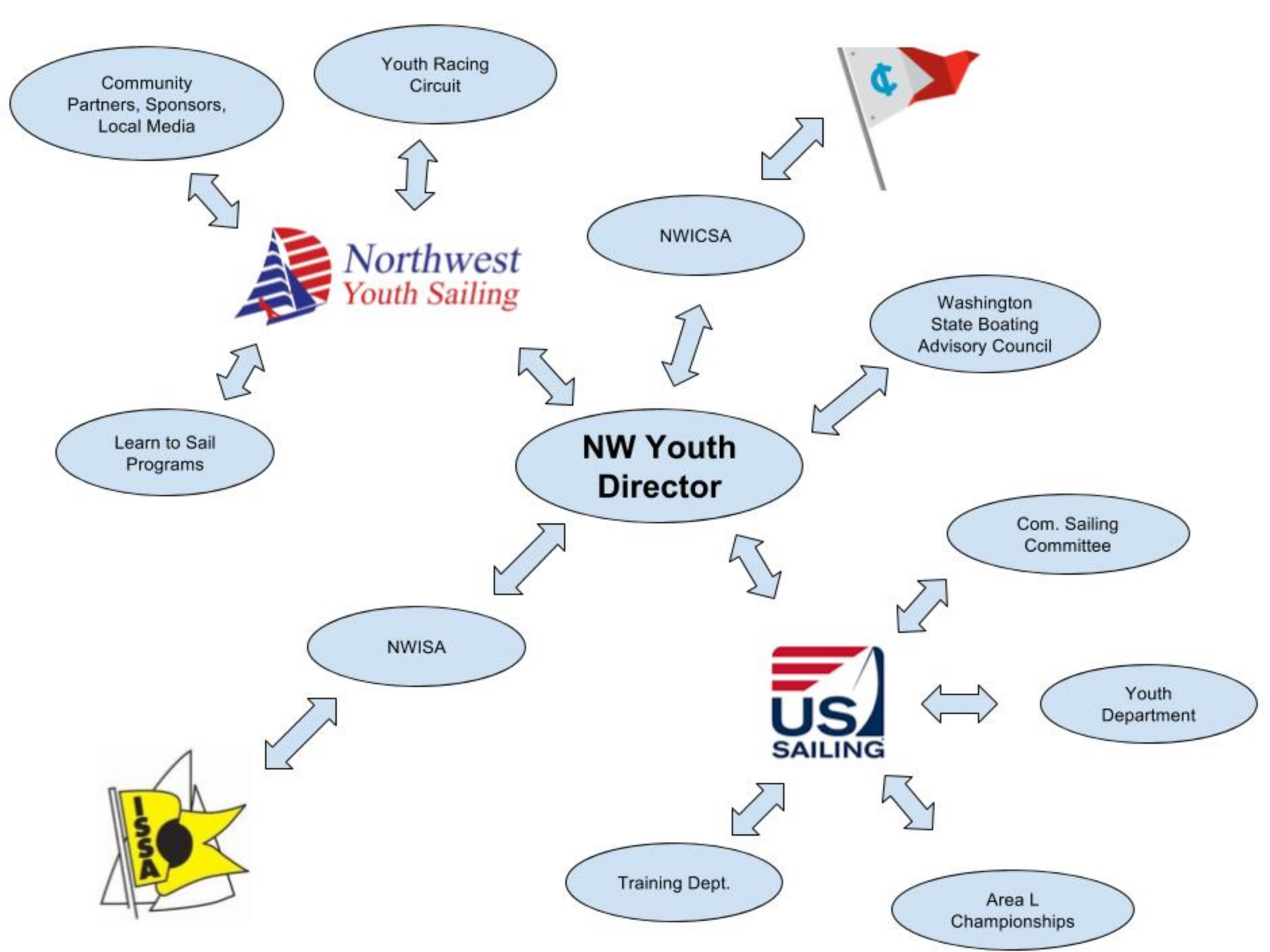
When it comes to Learn to Sail classes, community sailing programs and yacht clubs have a lot in common. Just like community sailing programs, most yacht clubs offer youth junior sailing classes that are open to the public, though yacht club members may receive a discounted price. Because most instructors are trained by US Sailing, the activities, curriculum, and quality of instruction is similar between yacht clubs and community based programs.

### What is a Learn to Sail Program Like?



### Find a Sailing Program



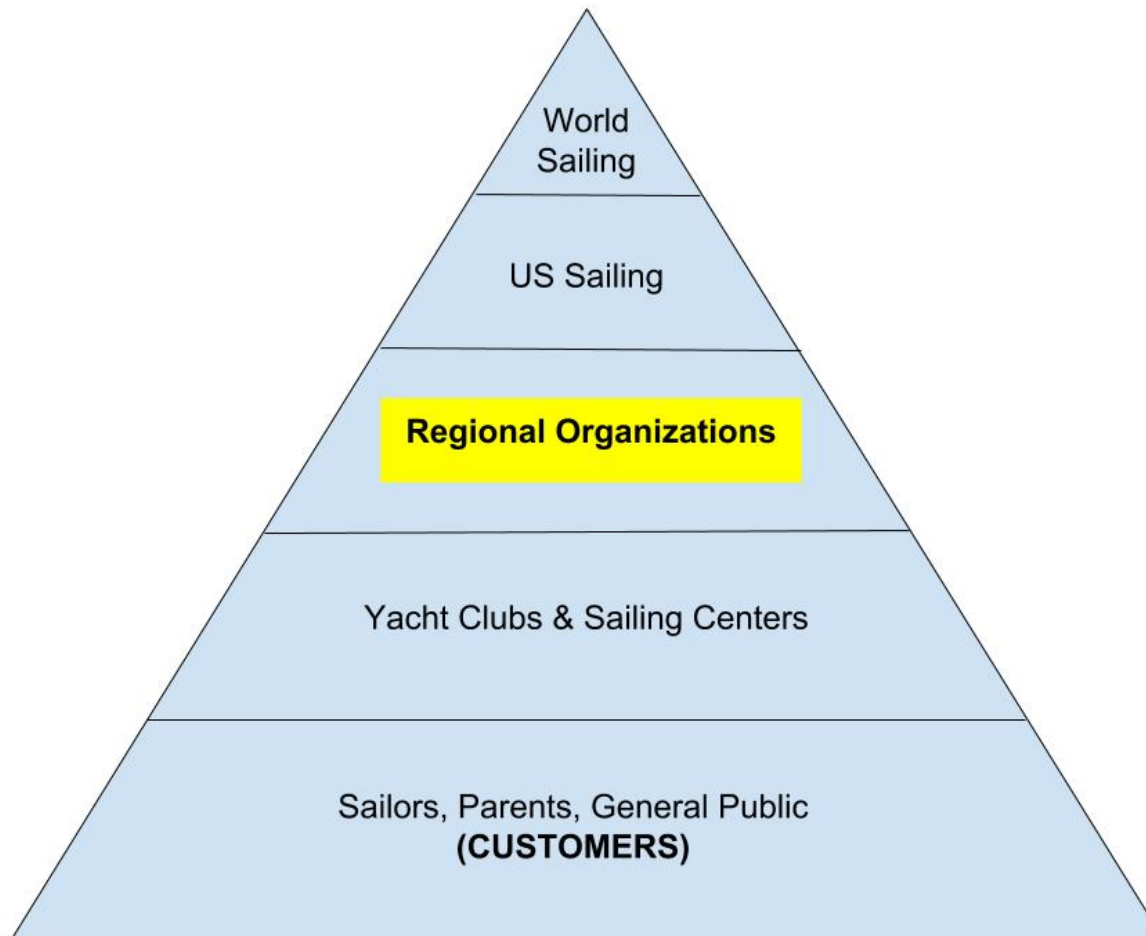






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# Where do Regional Orgs Fit In?





# Core Beliefs About Our Mission

## 1) It's beneficial to our entire community when more youth are sailing...

- Regardless of how and where they are doing it.
- We can't just focus on racing or a few select sailing centers/yacht clubs

## 2) A high tide floats all boats

- It's the sailors that ultimately push each other
- We have to provide the framework and opportunities... AND make them known!

## 3) Youth is a broad term and our strategy must be reflective of that

- Holistic Approach

## 4) Stay in tune with what's happening at the national level

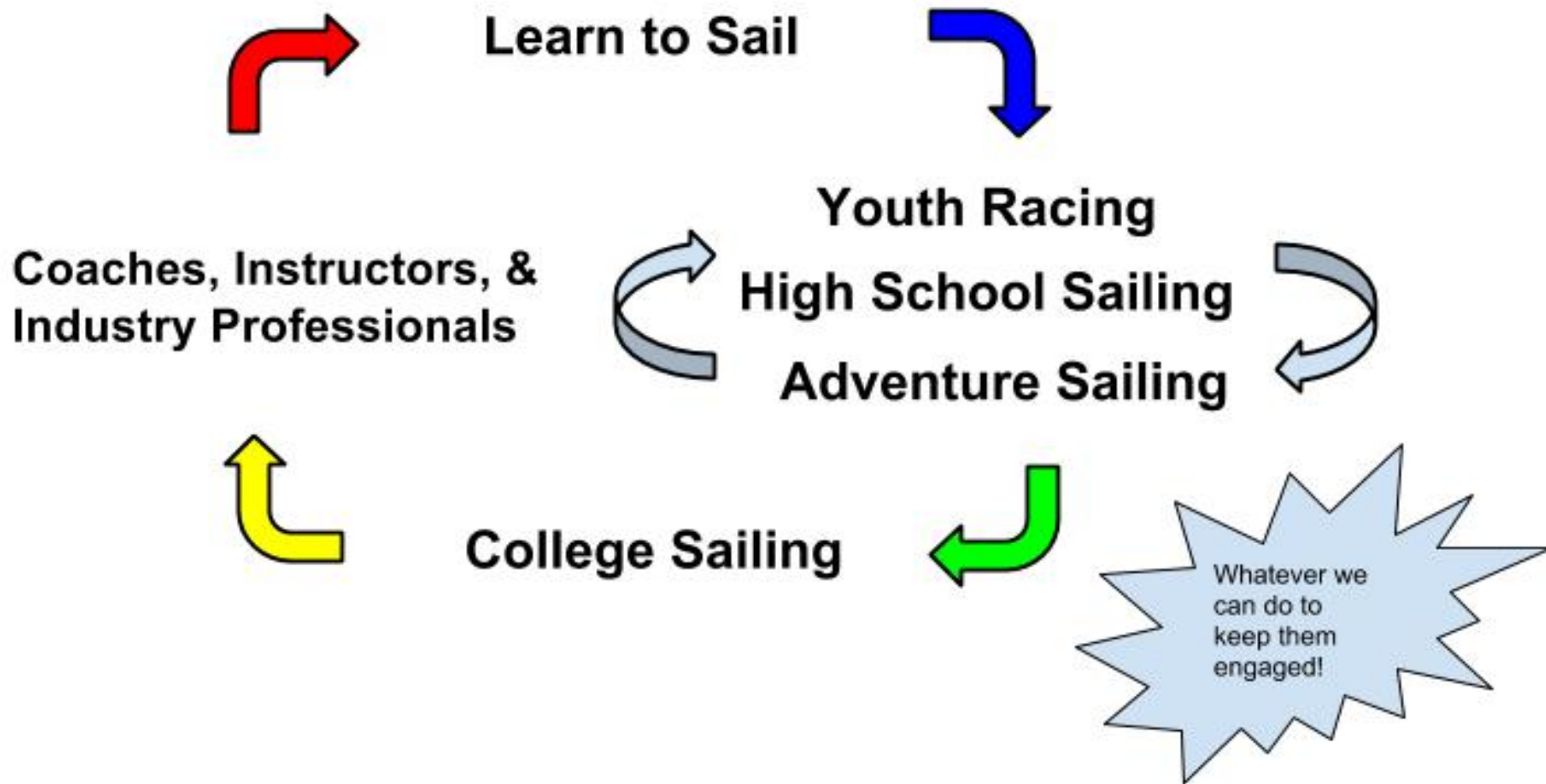
- Work with US Sailing not against them
- Serve as Unofficial Area Ambassador and Representative
- But Always...

**Believe in the power to affect change at the local level! We can do a lot that a NGB can't!**





# Keeping the Big Picture in Mind



# NW Youth Sailing is the “Brand” behind our Youth Sailing Initiative

- **One stop place for info on junior sailing**
  - Includes info on Racing and Learn to Sail
  - Work to promote regional opportunities
  - Website, Social Media, Classifieds/Forums, Branding
- **Sailing Foundation Board Gives Guidance**
  - Composed of area Coaches, Professionals, and former college sailors, and parents
  - Collection of local experts with shared interest in our mission
- **NW Youth Sailing is the outward face of junior sailing community in our area**
  - THE Organization
  - Media relations, Regatta Results, regular youth updates
  - Biannual newsletters
  - Regular email blasts to different “lists”
- **Easy to trace to the “parent organization”**  
-> **The Sailing Foundation**



# Successes

- **Raising the Game of Learn to Sail**
  - More Programs reporting growth/full classes
  - Producing more instructors to keep up with demand
  - More programs buying into best practices and standards
- **Building a Culture of Cooperation**
  - Area has always been great at working together, but now especially
  - Good personal relationships between area coaches, clubs, and leaders makes it easy to trust and help each other out.
  - Open Door Policy with most Sailing Centers and Clubs
- **Increasing Participation in Youth Racing**
  - HS Sailing is breaking attendance records every season. More schools emerging in new locations.
  - Summer Racing Series participation up from 340 in 2014 to 608 in 2016 (7 regatta Series)
  - Increased caliber of racing among top and middle levels
- **Transformation of Programs that are Buying In**
  - Almost Double the number of paid coaches/director positions
  - Our efforts have spurred expansion around the region
  - Catching up to other parts of the country



# Challenges

- **Funding**
  - Our donor provided us with the first year of funding. Since then we've been dipping into our piggy bank.
  - Cost is about \$100,000 a year, which includes director salary, operating costs, RIBs, Scholarships/Travel Grants etc.
  - Currently running a \$50,000 a year deficit. Not sustainable YET!
  - Seeking different funding streams than our area junior programs so that we're not in competition.
- **We can't force area programs to buy in**
  - Generally our efforts have been VERY well received by our local communities.
  - We mostly offer carrots
  - However, not all organizations fully utilize The Foundation as a resource. Some remain very insular or set in their ways... And those are the programs that could probably use the most support!
  - We don't have membership, but it is something we've considered
  - Especially challenging bringing in "non-traditional" programs.
- **Measuring Success**
  - Data is obtainable, but how do you measure our impact?
  - Example: How may people do we actually reach? Directly or indirectly?
  - Gains and benefit are often down the road... like way down the road
- **There are some things we can't change... Like Geography**
  - Yep, or weather for that matter

# What else COULD we do?

- **Junior Instructor Exchange Program**
  - Serve as a clearinghouse for junior instructors
  - Encourage JI's to experience the way it's done at other programs
  - Great for cross-pollination of good ideas and culture
- **Team Northwest**
  - Coaching area sailors at travel regattas
  - Only one club that does a lot of regular travel outside of our area.
  - Not just for youth racing. College too?
  - We have the assets to do it, but it's expensive and demand not quite there yet.
- **High Performance Loaner Fleet**
  - Provide access to new(er) designs and introduce high performance sailing.
  - High performance boats are usually out of the question for junior programs (and parents)
- **Mobile Sailing School**
  - Some great examples of this already out there. BC does M.O.S.S (Mobile Opti Sailing School). Six Optis in a cargo trailer that reach remote areas of the province and introduce sailing to new communities.
  - We have a lot of communities with water access, but no sailing opportunities
  - Again, cost is main barrier right now
- **NW Coaches' Academy**
  - Ongoing informal coach development seminars and small group mentoring

# Final Thoughts

- Not necessary to have a full-time regional youth director to be a stellar regional organization.
  - Many of these strategies and ideas can be implemented by volunteers
- However, a paid position has the benefit of...
  - Attention and time can be fully devoted to the mission
  - Accountability, Consistency, and Professionalism
  - Central point of contact within the organization
  - Similar to when a junior sailing program decides to take the leap and hire a full time director or coach
- Can your area support a Regional Director?



# Contact Info

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**[www.nwyouthsailing.org](http://www.nwyouthsailing.org)**