

Oakville Easter Seals Regatta begins second decade

by **Herb Garbutt**
Oakville Beaver Staff

Eleven years ago, local boaters teamed up with the Easter Seals to give 20 Halton families the experience of cruising around Lake Ontario.

For the families, because of the mobility issues faced by their children, such an adventure would have previously presented too many obstacles.

Now entering its second decade, the Easter Seals Regatta continues to provide the opportunity to hit the open water.

“The families love the freedom of enjoying their time out on the water,” said Caroline Wallace, senior development officer at Easter Seals Ontario. “It’s a nice break for the families and the kids love the speed of the boats and feeling the wind in their faces.”

The 11th annual Oakville Easter Seals Regatta will take place Saturday, July 18. Members of the Oakville Power Boat Club will once again donate their time and boats to take local Easter Seals children and their families out on the lake. Meanwhile, members of the Bronte Harbour Yacht Club and the Oakville Yacht Squadron will stage a regatta to raise money for Easter Seals.

Stephen Cull, a member of the organizing committee, got involved by donating the use of his boat. Cull broke his neck in a tobogganing accident when he was 28, so he understands the



The 10th annual Easter seals kids Regatta last summer gave physically disabled children and their families an opportunity to cruise Lake Ontario aboard boats from three of Oakville’s boating clubs – the Bronte Harbour Yacht Club, Oakville Power Boat Club and the Oakville Yacht Squadron.

| Oakville Beaver file photo

barriers someone in a wheelchair faces when trying to participate in activity like boating.

“In the summer, people flock to the water, whether it’s to go out on the water or have a picnic by the lake,” he said. “Why should it be any different for someone with mobility challenges?”

On the day of the regatta, a buffet breakfast is held for the participants. Members of the Oakville marine police and Oakville fire

fighters then help children board the boats. The children and their families then spend on the water, either watching the regatta or cruising around the lake.

“So many of these children would never have the opportunity to go out for a couple of hours on the water,” Wallace said.


The number of families that participate has almost doubled since the event began, with 35 taking part last year.

Boaters and regatta participants raise money through pledges, which the Easter Seals uses for its programs, sending children to camp or providing vital equipment such as wheelchairs or communication devices for its clients. The event has raised \$215,000 since it began.

“A specialized wheelchair can cost as much as \$40,000,” Wallace said. “And children can grow so quickly that every few years they need a new one. (This equipment) is so important to help them live more independently.”

Wallace said the community has been very supportive of the event since its inception. Denny’s provides the breakfast and several Oakville restaurants provide food for a culinary tasting event for boaters and sailors. A silent auction also helps raise money.


Those wishing to support this year’s event, can contact Wallace at cwallace@easterseals.org or by calling 905-639-0185. Silent auction items and a title sponsor for the event are still needed.



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