

Mental Health Awareness Week: Helping those for whom life has not all been plain sailing

by Simon Collyer 10 May 14:57 BST
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Simon Collyer & Hannah Stodel © Steve Brading

Simon Collyer, founder & CEO of the Association of Disabled & Disabled Sailors and founder of SAILING WELLNESS

Olympic sailor Hannah Stodel, to sail RC (radio-controlled) model yachts in a Colchester swimming pool.

SAILING WELLNESS is a 'Blue Health' initiative designed to help military personnel suffering from PTSD, stress, anxiety, and depression. Also planned is the acquisition of resources to get the seriously disabled sailing in the International Hansa 303 Class, which is raced in the para-Olympics and Invicta Games.

Professional sailor Hannah Stodel was born without a forearm and with three kidneys and suffered from bullying in her school years. Despite this initial setback, Hannah competes in top ocean racing events as a professional sailor including the Fastnet race. Hannah's dream is to find the backing to be the first disabled person to take part in the rigorous Vendée Globe, a single-handed race non-stop around the Globe.

SAILING WELLNESS has attracted substantial funding recently from the Essex based Fowler, Smith and Jones Trust and much larger funding from the Veterans Foundation.

Simon, who raced in the Olympic 470 Class, a 16-foot high-performance dinghy, representing the UK at international events and pre-Olympics wanted to do more to assist his cohort of strugglers. Realizing that Military personnel could benefit from the sheer joy of going on the water, he set out to create an initiative to get participants learning to sail to RYA dinghy levels, one, two and three in which participants can sail a dinghy in moderate weather.

We are not simply planning to set up a sailing school, says Simon, but by teaching participants to sail, this breaks the cycle of rumination where people keep going over and over their past. Dinghy sailing needs a lot of application and concentration. Also planned are talks and social events.

We can help introduce people into the sailing community says Simon, and the plan is they can go on to learn new skills as there are over 80 RYA courses. Army personnel make excellent instructors and learning sailing skills can open many doors. Above all else, it gets personnel out of their house and gets them mixing again with their peer group and having a laugh, which is sometimes the best medicine.

Simon has received guidance and ideas from the Army Personnel Recovery Centre (PRC) based in Colchester.

Unfortunately, Simon had just started doing a talk in schools in Portsmouth called Human Potential when the pandemic hit.

'We all have potential, so why do some people excel while many more struggle through life...?' 'People are a collection of habits' says Simon... getting young people to think about what they do and why they do it... these talks can help young people chose a better path and make better choices.

In the SAILING WELLNESS project, Simon has assembled a Steering Group of top mental health experts and sailors. Olympic Gold and Silver medalist and Rolex Yachtsman of the Year Saskia Clark is a patron.

Father Charles Clark is a sailing coach and radio-controlled model yacht racing expert who helped set up this initiative with Hannah and Simon.

The European Union finished a huge project in 2020 looking at the effects that water can have on wellbeing and mental health. It will come as no surprise to those who get on the water and 'mess about in boats' that there is a benefit to health and wellbeing.

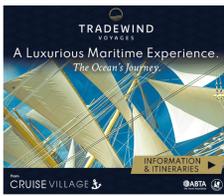


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On the day early heavy rain eased to show almost perfect sailing conditions. Race officer Alan Bennett set good windward leeward courses and provided a rapid turn around of races.
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Leading technical clothing and accessories manufacturer Typhoon International has created two new children's lifejackets, the Bouley Vest, for infants to three years old, and the Filey Vest for children to 12 years old.
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Persico 69F Cup put on a show in Malcesine
Fourteen crews battled it out over two long weekends of regattas, World Champions and Olympic sailors like Paul Goodson, Umberto Molineris and Lorenzo Bressani reinforced the flying teams on the waters of Lake Garda.
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Zhik introduces new UVActive shirts
The importance of protecting your skin from harmful UV, even in cloudy conditions, is well understood in the southern hemisphere yet less so in the northern hemisphere.
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After a year's break, maxi racing resumes in Capri
Following a very sparse season in 2020, inshore maxi yacht racing fired up in anger again today in Capri, Italy, with the start of the Maxi Yacht Capri Trophy, part of Rolex Capri Sailing Week, running from today to May 14.
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Finn Gold Cup Day 4: Maloney & Junior run the show
New Zealand's Andy Maloney has extended his lead at the 2021 Finn Gold Cup in Porto, Portugal, to take a five-point lead into the final day on Wednesday, with three races possible.
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Rolex Capri Sailing Week day 1
The first day of racing in the Rolex Capri Sailing Week saw the Race Committee wait for the breeze to stabilise before starting the first race of the event.
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Upcoming Events

North Sea Race CANCELLED for IRC and ORC plus Class 40 and MOCRA
Royal Ocean Racing Club- 14 May

Highfield Honda Coves - Yarmouth for Small IRC yachts
Junior Offshore Group- 15 May

Open Meeting for RS Aero
Lymington Town SC- 15 May

***POSTPONED* Open Meeting for RS Aero**
Scammonden Water SC- 16 May

Lago Maggiore International Regatta, Italy for RS Aero
UVV Maccagno, Lago Maggiore, Italy- 21 May to 23 May

Vice Admiral's Cup for Various one design keelboat classes
Royal Ocean Racing Club- 21 May to 23 May

Myth of Malham Race for IRC, Class 40 & Multihull
Royal Ocean Racing Club- 29 May

UK Southern Championship for RS Aero
Weymouth & Portland Sailing Academy- 29 May to 30 May

English Riviera Dinghy Regatta for Monohull dinghies/multihulls
Brixham YC- 29 May to 30 May

Class Championships for Fowey River Class
Fowey Gallants SC- 29 May to 31 May