



## OPENING UP THE WATER FOR EVERYONE

*Meet three people who have devoted their careers to giving everyone access to recreational boating*



Adam Green puts the students through their paces.

**Y**OU'D THINK SOMEONE DEDICATED to building boats and taking a bunch of kids out onto the South Bronx River in all kinds of weather must have some deep-seated childhood love of all things nautical. Not so in the case of Adam Green. "I don't have that much boating history," he says. "My parents were involved

with the *Clearwater* sloop on the Hudson River, but that was really my only involvement in sailing, as a kid." While in college at Vassar in Poughkeepsie, New York, *Clearwater's* headquarters, Green volunteered as a crew member. There, he met a teacher from East Harlem's Maritime School, who dreamed of building a boat with his eighth-grade students, but had no time to do it. Green volunteered for the task even though he had no boatbuilding experience. The resulting 14-foot plywood-and-epoxy boat was a huge hit when the students floated it in the school's basement pool. The project was so inspirational to Green that in 1996, he created Rocking The Boat as an after-school program in the South Bronx. The inaugural boat was a 14-foot Whitehall built from scratch in an office. The one thing Green hadn't planned for was that when the boat was finished, they'd have to break down a wall to get it out.

"We're a youth-development organization," he explains. "That means we're not just here to stop kids [from] getting in trouble. We want them to be real successes, and to empower them by giving them real maritime, environmental, and boatbuilding skills." The program has built 30-plus boats to date, many of which have been the original 14-foot Whitehall rowing boats, the primary small craft used throughout New York Harbor in the 18th and early 19th centuries. Other designs they've completed include a Cape Cod oyster skiff, a colonial river ferry, a Rangeley

Lake boat, and a Melonseed skiff (the decked sailboats traditionally used in New Jersey tidal estuaries).

The on-water programs mean literally that. The participants are on the river every day from March through December that weather allows — and even on some that don't. "We've been known to do snow-rows," says Green. As the organization grew, it moved to a 6,000-square-foot building in the South Bronx that they took over and restored. "Best of all, the majority of our kids, 74 percent, go on to college" — a phenomenal statistic considering Green says the demographic in the South Bronx shows that only 10 percent of adults attend college. "Several participants have gone on to environmental studies and into the boating trades. Others have worked as crew members on tall ships, or gotten involved in carpentry." The program also hires its former students. "We have 14 skilled former students earning a living here. They're responsible for running our programs." — **A.D.**