

# Life & Style

## Now that it's seaworthy, it's see worthy

Linda Lombroso  
The Journal News

With a gentle push into the Pocantico River, a group of Bronx students celebrated Columbus Day by launching a handmade boat similar to those used in 18th-century Westchester. The 21-foot bateau-style river vessel, created this summer by students and apprentices from the Bronx-based Rocking the Boat — and launched yesterday at Philipsburg Manor — will become a permanent part of the collection at the 18th-century farming, milling and trading complex in Sleepy Hollow.

The vessel, similar to those used to transport goods from Philipsburg Manor along the Hudson River to New York City, was modeled after 18th-century bateau remains discovered in Lake George in the early 1960s. Over a period of seven weeks in July and August, the Rocking the Boat students traveled to the Sleepy Hollow site, where they dressed in period clothing before getting to work. But it wasn't until yesterday that they could fully appreciate the fruits of their labor. "It's great to see that it didn't sink and that our hard work paid off," said Kadijah Abdur-Rahim, 18.

"To know that we actually built it without power tools and it floats, it feels good," said Ramonita Berrios, 20.

"It's very exciting," added Chris Haimraj, 15. "It's like you're creating



Mark Vergari/The Journal News

The hand-crafted bateau-style boat that was built by the Rocking the Boat youth group takes to the water at Philipsburg Manor in Sleepy Hollow yesterday. In the boat: students Ramonita Berrios, staff member Ernest Pollman, and students Kadijah Abdur-Rahim and Bilal Ranginwala.

new life and putting it in the water."

"The process is really important. Putting it in the water is a huge thing," said Rocking the Boat founder and director Adam Green, whose nonprofit organization uses boat-building and on-water education to teach skills to inner city youth. "The best way to learn about history is to be involved in it — to be able to build a traditional local boat and to enrich it with the most unbelievably deep learning process."

For Historic Hudson Valley, having a boat will make it easier to tell the story of Philipsburg Manor. "Unless you have a boat there, it is very hard to visualize the connection between the mill, the wharf and the river," said Waddell W. Stillman, president of HHV, which operates the property. "We're thrilled to have the workhorse bateau."

Peter Curtis, the site's miller, believes the boat will add a new dimen-

### Rocking another boat

Historic Hudson Valley is teaming up with Rocking the Boat to raise funds for another boat-building project next summer. For information, call HHV's Peter Pockriss at 914-631-8200, ext. 613. Learn more at [rockingtheboat.org](http://rockingtheboat.org).

sion to Philipsburg Manor. "I'm ecstatic 'cause it's something I'd wanted, to have something we can interpret," said Curtis, whose tours include stories of the site's enslaved Africans. "It's just a great thing to see it done on site and to have a visual exhibit. It's very important to the museum and very important to the interpretation."

Stillman hopes that Rocking the Boat will again work with Philipsburg Manor next summer, perhaps building a larger vessel. But most agree there's nothing like launching a handmade boat, no matter what its size. "It's exciting and incredibly fulfilling to see," said Green. "The boat obviously is a metaphor for all the things we work for. Self-esteem, pride, happiness and a feeling of accomplishment are all encapsulated in this piece of wood. So when it goes into the water, it's really a special moment."

Reach Linda Lombroso at [llombros@thejournalnews.com](mailto:llombros@thejournalnews.com) or 914-694-5059.