

## Hope floats

A Bronx boatbuilding program teaches kids lessons they can carry off the water **By Alec Appelbaum**

Boating's reputation as a rich man's sport is hardly undeserved. For one, it requires access to two critical resources typically hard to come by for most folks—a body of water and a boat. For the last six years, Adam Green has been making those assets available to scores of young New Yorkers through his Bronx-based boatbuilding program.

Green, 30, is the founder and executive director of Rocking the Boat, a nonprofit organization that teaches high-school students how to construct and operate 14- to 17-foot-long Whitehall rowboats. The 15-week program—which is offered after school and throughout the summer—is free and open to anyone of high-school age who completes an application and interview. Its mission is to empower youngsters by assigning them measurable tasks.

On Saturday 24, several recent alumni will display the fruits of their labor at the Amazing Bronx River Boat Flotilla, which will showcase nine vessels they made by hand, from scratch. Coordinated by the Bronx River Alliance, the event will commence with a six-mile paddle along the river and culminate in a family-friendly block party at Concrete Plant Park, featuring boat rides, games, walking tours and live entertainment. "This will be one of the first times that our students will work with other groups on the river," shop-foreman-boatbuilding-assistant Ted Okie says. "I'm sure a bunch of our kids are going to be taking out kids who have never been rowing before. I can't teach everything at once, and to see our kids teaching other kids is a cool process."

Rocking the Boat's roots go back to 1996, when Hostos Community College hired Green to instruct a group of 12 high-school students in how to build a Whitehall, over the course of an academic year. The project gave students a fun after-school and Saturday forum for

learning teamwork, measurement and physics. Because of logistical conflicts, Green and Hostos parted ways, leaving Green on the lookout for a new port to call home.

For the next two years, he searched for a community-based



**HULL HOUSE** Rocking the Boat teaches local high-school students some empowering lessons that will serve them well in life and on the water.

sponsor to help reactivate his stalled program. In 1998, he partnered with an unlikely ally—New Settlement Apartments, which manages 993 apartments and provides a range of social services in the South Bronx, including youth internships and summer-volunteer opportunities on *The Clearwater*, folksinger Pete Seeger's sloop on the upper Hudson. "Our neighborhood is mainly concrete," New Settlement's executive director Jack Doyle says, "so getting young people to recognize that we should have access to water is significant."

New Settlement gave Green workshop space in the basement of one of its buildings and hired him as a staff member. Two years later, New Settlement negotiated a lease for Rocking the Boat, at a 174th Street storefront. In 2001, Rocking the Boat became an independent not-for-profit. (Full disclosure: I have donated to the organization.)

In addition to its flagship boatbuilding program, Rocking the Boat has expanded to include courses in on-water education (habitat monitoring, restoration and maritime skills), forestry and environmental science. Each semester, Rocking the Boat hires four to six former students to stay on as paid shop apprentices, who serve as liaisons between the students and the staff.

As the good word about Rocking the Boat continues to spread, so does its influence. Last year, the New York Harbor School, a public school in Bushwick, Brooklyn, tapped Green to weave boatbuilding into its curriculum; the city pays Rocking the Boat for ongoing ecological revitalization projects

at the Bronx River; and biologists at New Jersey's Montclair State University rely on Rocking the Boat's students to collect river samples for research purposes.

Green recruits participants at nearby schools in the Bronx and Harlem with the assistance of New Century High Schools, an organization that helps the city's Department of Education manage theme-based high schools. "Classes are oversubscribed for the first week," Green says, but the two-day-a-week, three-hour-a-day work shifts engender self-selection. "Those who stay are involved in every aspect of construction," Okie adds. "Some naturally pick up the more complicated stuff and some say, 'Just give me something to sand.'"

**For more information, visit [rockingtheboat.org](http://rockingtheboat.org) or call 718-466-5799. The Amazing Bronx River Boat Flotilla is Saturday 24. See listings for details.**

## Listings

### IF YOU WANT TO BE LISTED

Submit information by mail, e-mail ([aroundtown@timeoutny.com](mailto:aroundtown@timeoutny.com)) or fax (646-432-3160) to **Ayren Jackson**. Include details of event, dates, times, address of venue with cross streets, nearest subways, telephone number and admission price, if any. **Deadline is 6pm on Monday, ten days before publication date.** Incomplete submissions will not be included, and listings information will not be accepted over the phone.

★=Recommended

### Thursday 22

#### Urban affairs

##### Arab Appreciation Day

*The Arab-American Family Support Center, 150 Court St between Dean and Pacific Sts, Carroll Gardens, Brooklyn (718-643-8000). Subway: 4, 5 to Borough Hall, 6pm. FREE* Celebrate Arab culture while mingling with local community and political leaders.

##### Fresh, Local, Organic Food: Come Meet the Farmer!

*Park Slope Food Coop, 782 Union St between Sixth and Seventh Aves, Park Slope, Brooklyn (718-707-1023; [www.parkslopeco.org](http://www.parkslopeco.org)). Subway: M, R to Union St, 7pm. FREE* Upstate farmer Ted Blomgren will be in Gotham to brag about Community Supported Agriculture, an organization that offers urbanites the chance to veg out on fresh organic veggies at bargain prices.

##### ★ "Game Face: What Does a Female Athlete Look Like?"

*World Financial Center, Courtyard Gallery, 225 Vesey St between North End Ave and West St (212-945-2600; [www.worldfinancialcenter.com](http://www.worldfinancialcenter.com)). Subway: A, C to Broadway-Nassau St; M, Z, 2, 3, 4, 5 to Fulton St (M weekdays only), 11am-6pm. Through Jun 6. FREE* This exhibition highlights the achievements and strength of female athletes both young and old.

##### ★ Giant Earth Images Show

*Grand Central Terminal, Main Concourse, 42nd St at Vanderbilt Ave ([www.earthdayny.org](http://www.earthdayny.org)). Subway: 42nd St S, 4, 5, 6, 7 to 42nd St-Grand Central, 10am-8pm. Through Sun 25. FREE* In commemoration of Earth Day, the terminal's main concourse will be illuminated by a massive projection show, featuring environmentally relevant quotes, photographs and images by Andy Warhol, Keith Haring and Roy Lichtenstein, among other artists.

##### ★ Girls Behaving Badly Casting Call

*Comic Strip Live, 1568 Second Ave between 81st and 82nd Sts (323-933-3399). Subway: 6 to 77th St, Registration 10am-noon; auditions 11am-6pm. FREE* The cast of the Oxygen network's hidden camera show is searching for NYC's funniest bad girl. The winner will be flown to L.A. for a guest appearance on an upcoming episode.

##### Iced Embellishment

*Corner of Broadway and 10th St (212-998-5751). Subway: R, W to 8th St-NYU (W weekdays only). Through May 16. FREE* Artist Pamela Hadfield's electrifying window installation of handcrafted, icing-covered chandeliers shines 24 hours a day near the sleepless NYU campus.

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