

Sail Training International

Changing young people's lives

Sail Training International talks to Shipshape about its work with youngsters around the world and the annual Tall Ships Races.

Sail Training International is a UK charity formed in 2002 by many of the people who had been involved in running The Tall Ships Races, in order to make a greater contribution to international sail training. It acquired the assets of the International Sail Training Association in 2002, and was granted charitable status in 2003. Since then its activities have diversified, and income and staff numbers have tripled. Its members today are the national sail training organisations of 26 countries around the world. Activities now include conferences and seminars, publications and DVD presentations, and international research, as well as the organisation of races and regattas for sail training tall ships. Next year there will be four events involving 11 host ports in nine countries.

Developing essential life skills

The primary focus of Sail Training International's activities and charitable purpose is the development and education of young people through

sail training, and the promotion of international understanding and friendship. The charity was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize 2007.

The organisation's main aim is to develop in young people through sail training some essential skills that will enrich their lives and help equip them for what life might throw at them. The value, necessity and skills required for both teamwork and leadership are key among these. So too is the development of self-worth and self-confidence. A major international and independent research study, funded by Sail Training International and published in 2006, demonstrated the effectiveness of sail training in delivering these attributes.

"We recently signed a new sponsorship agreement that gives us financial stability for the next four or five years. But all that does is enable us to function with the same level of activity that we have today, and this is our biggest single frustration," says Nigel Rowe, president and chairman. "We are opportunity rich and resource poor, and our current number one priority is to generate additional income from event sponsorship and charitable donations."

High profile attention

The organisation's biggest single opportunity for sponsorship funding is the annual Tall Ships Races in northern Europe, from the Baltic to the Iberian Peninsula. The 2009 races attracted a fleet of nearly 130 sail training vessels (including 24 big square rigged ships), some 7,000 trainee crew members, and literally millions of visitors to the four host ports. These events often attract head-of-state interest – this year the race trophies were presented in St Petersburg by Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin.

Shipleys was invited to be auditor when Sail Training International was first established. Since then, in addition to audit services, Shipleys has provided advice on a range of issues from currency exchange management to VAT. "It's been a very effective partnership from our perspective," says Nigel Rowe.

For further information or to find out how you can get involved, visit:
www.sailtraininginternational.org