

Writing and sailing have a lot in common, says island author

By Holly Benton

For islander, author and 2004 Olympic sailing champion Carol Newman Cronin, sailing is more than just a sport.

It's a way to teach life skills and empowerment.

A launch party for Cronin's second book, "Cape Cod Surprise," took place in Boston on July 1, serving as both a book release and a fundraiser for Boston's Piers Park Sailing Center.

"When I talked to them about doing the launch party and fundraiser, I didn't realize we had so much in common," Cronin said of the center. "We share a basic philosophy, which is teaching life skills through sailing and that created a nice glue between the two of us — between a non-profit and a book coming out."

Cronin said she feels she has benefited from her recent work during the launch with the sailing center, a non-profit organization in East Boston that offers people

of various ages and abilities the chance to sail in Boston Harbor and beyond.

The event consisted of daytime activities, as well as an evening party in Boston at the Sail Loft, from which all proceeds went to the Piers Park Sailing Center. Both "Cape Cod Surprise" and a video commemorating Cronin's work with the sailing center — "Where Books Meet Olympic Spirit"—were launched.

During the day, Cronin spent her time working with the youth and talking with them about writing.

"What really excited me about the launch party is the work I did with the Piers Park kids during the day," she said. "They have a morning and an afternoon session, so I worked with two groups of kids, and as a group, we wrote a story based on Oliver as the main character."

Oliver, the main character of both Cronin's new book and her



Carol Newman Cronin

first, "Oliver's Surprise," was initially inspired by her own nephew. The books tell the story of a young boy who travels back through time, first to the Great Hurricane of 1938 in "Oliver's Surprise" and then into the teeth of the 1954 Hurricane Carol in "Cape Cod Surprise."

Cronin said she enjoyed sharing her writing experiences with the children because it taught them that you can write about something

that excites you—like boats.

"It's a way of teaching kids about writing without them really realizing that they're learning, which is a lot of fun," Cronin said. "What I was trying to share with them, and I think they got, was that you can write about what excites you. It's fun. We just had a great time as a group and it really showed them the different aspects of how you go about writing a book and taught them a little bit about boats as well."

Cronin became acquainted with the Piers Park Sailing Center through friend and 2008 Paralympic Games gold medalist, Maureen McKinnon-Tucker, who works as the adapting coordinator at the sailing center.

The relationship gave both Piers Park and Cronin an opportunity they were looking for.

"Maureen was very excited to gain them some visibility and also have a fundraiser in association with my book," she said. "It worked out really well for everybody."

Cronin added that she was excited about the unexpected chance to work with the children, many of whom are either underprivileged or disabled — and to merge their philosophies of teaching life skills through sailing.

"I think that there's a lot they can get from sailing. It teaches independence, but also teaches dependence on your teammates and

working together," she said. "It teaches respect for the elements. Maureen made a point about realizing that there are things that are larger than you are in the world and for disabled kids — and adults, for that matter — it provides a sense of power. Quadriplegics who can't move a muscle can sail a boat. For kids, it's a way of showing them that working together gets them further than working on their own, but they also need to be independent and take care of themselves."

Sailing and writing, Cronin said, both require not only self-motivation, but discipline and a desire to push yourself.

She looks forward to several upcoming regattas, including the Snipe Western Hemisphere and Orient Championships in September and the Snipe Women's Worlds in November.

"One of the great things about sailing is it's a life sport and you can start it at any age," said Cronin, who started sailing when she was just 10 days old. "I was just lucky to get into it young and to be interested in it young enough to stick with it my whole life."

With future writing plans in mind, Cronin also looks forward to an upcoming book signing from 2 to 4 p.m. this Sunday, July 25, at the Armchair Sailor in Newport.

"Cape Cod Surprise" can be purchased in Jamestown at Conanicut Marina and at Baker's Pharmacy.

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