



OFFICERS		
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MISSION STATEMENT – *The mission of the Fond du Lac Sailing Club is to provide sailing events for the recreation, challenge, and pleasure of the membership, while promoting safety, fellowship and an opportunity to improve sailing skills and knowledge.*

Commodore's Comments

Happy New Year to you all,
I suppose everyone is still recovering from the change of year. Don't forget the "4" on your dates. I heard that some people make excursions by water to the island on New Year's, did that happen this year? There can't be any icebergs to be wary of, unfortunately. The iceboaters are lamenting the hot weather but I have seen others seeming to actually enjoy the mild temperatures. This is also a good time to check your winter boat covers, knots won't be frozen, and tarps may actually be pliable if readjustments need to be made. Those of you that ski will have to head north, way north. Hopefully a real winter will be upon us soon.

Keep warm,
Andy Gratton

NEXT MEETING

**Thursday, Jan. 4, 7 p.m.
FDL Yacht Club**

COMING EVENTS

**FDL Sailing Club hosts the
Winter Ice Party
Saturday, Feb. 17, 1 p.m. to ?**

**Join the FDL Yacht Club, FDL Sailing
Club, FDL Boating Club and Nauti Gals
Saturday, Mar. 23, 7 p.m.
For a night at the Fondy Bears Hockey
Blue Line Center**

Dues for 2024

As we enter a new year, it is time to replenish our funds for expenses in the coming year. You can fill out your membership renewal on our website by going to our website and choosing About Us and then Membership form. [Or click here.](#) This form is a fill in form so you can just type in your information and then print the completed form from your browser by clicking on the printer icon usually found in the upper right part of the window. Or you can print it out and fill it in by hand. Or you can fill out a form at a future meeting. Dues are still \$20 for renewals plus \$35 for each class of racing that you participate in. If you want to mail in your dues, you can send them to the FDL Sailing Club, c/o FDL Yacht Club, P.O. Box 1930, Fond du Lac, WI 54936.

Note: Whoever made the form didn't leave enough room for an area code, so just put in your 7 digits and write in the area code after you print it should your code not be 920.

Happy New Year to Everyone

2023 is behind us and I'm looking forward to what 2024 brings. Hoping to spend as much time out in nature as last year and more time on the water. After 21 years of more or less heading the Youth Sailing Program, it's time for me to pass the baton. Unfortunately, high iron has damaged my joints which impairs my ability to accomplish as much as I have in the past. Limited range of motion has diminished my balance significantly. Motion is lotion as you age and it takes more and more time in the morning to get the lotion warmed up. Not complaining, I feel blessed, having a great life so far, still upbeat!

Mainsheet



The FDL YC Youth Sailing program has been very instrumental to the community, bringing the Winnebago Lake experience to many fortunate Kids that would have missed out, but are now more rounded from it. I sometimes wonder how many kids went through the program. It's been going on since 1959 and there were years when Dan T. and Paul were instrumental in teaching almost 100 kids. I want to thank all the volunteers who assisted over the years. Without their support the program would not be near what it is today. Dan T's unfortunate passing at too young of an age was missed by the Team. He was totally committed to the program, working hard while keeping the fun in it and a joy to hang with Him.



So as many of you know this very program is how my Whole family, parents included got into sailing. After graduating from the Youth program and wanting to keep sailing I/we needed a boat. My father, being a DYI got plans and we manufactured a boat in the

basement in time to have it on the water for the next season. I had some really fun days in high school sailing with my father, grandfather and many friends. Right before HS graduation my father's fatal encounter with a drunk driver put my whole family in a tailspin. Life took me away from sailing and my sports of choice were skiing water or snow. I moved closer to my job (John Deere) living on the Rock River. Great for water skiing, terrible for sailing.



1982 I meet Andy (college) at the YC to watch him windsurf. Having heard of it but never seeing it I was totally impressed. It looked like waterskiing and sailing! I could do both so I should be able to jump right on and do as good as my little brother. He was ripping it up in 20+ onshore, big white caps in front of the YC. After much deliberation Andy convinced me to try it in the big hole. Well, I was humiliated but determined to learn this new very cool sport of sailing. Bought a board and with Andy's help the rest is history. I was addicted to windsurfing. The wind on the Rock River was so swirly and gusty that I frequented many of the area bigger lakes spreading the joy of sailing. For some unanalyzed reason I thought making a business of teaching and selling windsurf equipment would be my future. I was teaching at area lakes and at the big hole. After seeing everyone was then windsurfing at Roosevelt Park (Pete's) I moved my operation there fortunately finding the lot across the road for sale which was zoned commercial.

Mainsheet



Andy got me into racing my first year of really windsurfing, and I enjoyed it even after taking last, I was committed to improving my racing skills. At first, I was known as Andy's brother on the racing circuit holding up the rear. In 1985 after many hours of fun and serious training Andy and I were tied for 1st after the first day of racing in the large Mid-west. We were mentioned on the area's radio station that night, which must have put me over the edge celebrating. The next day I struggled to get 3rd while Andy held on to 1st. It was a turning point in my racing, and I continued to train and participate in national races. I was so fortunate to experience the comradery, competition and training of the Olympic Team while coaching FDL native Melissa Spoerke who had worked her way to 3rd place on the Olympic team. The racing led to hosting races here on Lake Winnebago with the Walleye Weekend Regatta becoming the biggest race in the Mid-west, with Olympic teams from USA and Canada attending. Participating in the 96 Olympic trials in Savannah Ga. culminated the Olympic experience. I was also fortunate to compete in more than a dozen World Championships.

How does the above relate to FDL YC Youth Sailing? It's what kindled the fire in the Gratton Family to love Sailing. My appreciation and feeling the importance of the Program to the community led me to volunteer my help with the program upon my retirement from John Deere.

There have been many positive changes in the FDL YC Youth Sailing program. The O'Pen Skiff youth boats are the modern-day Youth boats that are very

durable and capable of high-performance sailing. Their biggest plus is they can capsize, be righted and sail away. No bailing! On the No Wind days, the kids now have a blast doing freestyle (balance tricks) versus the old Prams that bored them so much they would not return the next week. We now have enclosed trailers to protect equipment. Lasers and Force5's for the older students that also work for adults. Moving the teaching area to the river, out of the confines and dangers of the Big Hole, was a huge improvement. The YC now has a Youth Sailing committee which informs and educates the YC membership on the progress of the program. There is also more involvement by more volunteers helping out.



I would like to stay involved with the program teaching the afternoon advanced O'pen Skiff kids. My dream would be to coach a racing team. I'm passing the baton for organizing and running meetings. Last year we had an awesome crew of volunteers which did a great job with all aspects of the program. Jack's idea of making modules worked really well and further experience and refinement will keep improving our program for the future generations.

I want to express my family's appreciation to Karin Whealon and Leo Schmitz for volunteering their valuable time to teach the Gratton's and so many other families over the many years they ran the program. Happy 2024 Think ICE
Kevin Gratton