The museum’s Maritime Program preserves the 19th century lifesavers’ skills and ethic as living artifacts. Through open-water rowing, job-training, island camping, and boat building, we explore character and community in one of the most gorgeous places on earth, Boston Harbor. Our boats and programs are inclusive and playful, demanding and ambitious, and strive to awaken the hero in each of us.

Photo by Lory Newmyer
Rowing creates a sense of utter happiness for me; rowing with the new friends I have made just makes it 10 times better. These friendships and my love for rowing has created lifelong bonds.

Ashley Jenkins
Youth Rower
“As a 67 year old rower myself, it is close on to addictive---the thrust of the oars pushing the boat forward, the thunk of oars on the thole pins, the sound of the water rushing by the bow. Exhilarating!”

Ed McGuire
Race Participant
Courage has many faces. Every year, we see 200 variations in the young people from New York and New England who converge for a grueling, late-November contest that tests their skill, stamina, and sportsmanship in a round-robin-style series of head-to-head races. The “key to the harbor” that every racer earns that day is a badge of honor and a powerful symbol of our rowing community.
On-the-water adventure, caring adult and peer leaders, delightful intellectual content – the recipe is simple, and magical. A year-round, experiential learning program, Home Waters awakens self-confidence, respect, academic skills, character development, and appreciation of nature among a cadre of 200 middle and high school-aged Bostonians every year.
“I feel I am on the right path right now. For the first time in my life, I’m getting paid the legal way and in a job that I really like without worrying about cops or enemies in the street. I’m really proud of myself...”

18-year-old MAP Apprentice
two months in program

Photo by Lory Newmyer
Summer in the city brings younger kids to the waterfront, including wonderful kids from local special needs programs. MAP apprentices work as junior counselors and big brothers as we explore the noisy, watery playground of Boston’s inner harbor with boatloads of burgeoning mariners.
“It was rowing with you that made it possible to come home from the War on Terror. When I came home, the only time I didn’t think about the war, and the intense experience I went through during my time in Central Asia, was when I was in a boat. To this day my problems go away, at least for a little bit, when I get behind an oar.”

Mike Davison
Adult Rower
South Shore Adult Rowing
Changing Lives Now

Ask any member of the museum’s adult rowing club why they slog to the tip of the peninsula on arctic Saturday mornings and sultry August nights and you’ll hear a consistent chorus: the people, the place, the peace. For some, it’s church. For others, it’s family. For all, it’s the best mental health around.

Photo by Corinne Leung
The Maritime Apprentice Program is an adoptive family for our apprentices. MAP’s staff of social workers, teachers, and trades people provides intensive, individualized, multi-year training for 20 Department of Youth Services-committed students annually, “the most high-impact players in the city of Boston.”
in our downtown Boston Seaport Boatshop, MAP prepares Boston’s most high-risk youth for adulthood and careers in the technical trades by providing hands-on, skills-based training, counseling, therapeutic support, and hope. MAP is a remarkable last chance for our apprentices, embracing the ethic of “never giving up.”
A race conceived 20 years ago to celebrate the power, beauty, and fragility of green space and blue space is now a ritual of autumn for the New England rowing community. The course gallops out the pristine Weir River estuary, past the parklands of World’s End, to explode across Hingham and Hull Bays in a riot of oars, paddles, and mariners of all stripes. This is our home, and we love it.
Snow Row

We’ve had crashes, grudges, and broken oars. Blizzards, ice floes, and balmy days. Even one No Row, with winds gusting to 50 MPH. But, for 30 years and counting, New England’s rowers and paddlers have gathered at one of winter’s great Happenings for two reasons: the vilified and adored LeMans start, and the right to say, “I was there!”

Photo by Dolly Snow Bicknell
Rowing/Sailing

Start with an 8-foot length of 2x4 fir, a canvas drop cloth from Lowes, and a sketch of a dipping-lug sail. Teach your students hollow-core technology, to build a mast, and the finer points of hand-sewing French seams, to make a sail. Add epoxy, clamps, waxed thread, a few grommets, and, voila! You’ve got a knock-down sail rig. Row your gig “uphill” into a stiff wind and tide, and then head for home on a luscious down-wind leg; ahhh, a free ride!
Who doesn’t love the feel of being exhilarated by the chilled ground under a sleeping bag, sated by gourmet fluffernutter for lunch, and calmed by the sounds of air, water, crackling fire, and laughter? Camping on the Harbor Islands gives us a whole different perspective on the urban wilderness, our place in it, and how we shape each other. Our idea? Unplug. Turn off. Wake up.
Twice a week, for 30 years, young people have found their way to an oasis at the very tip of Hull to be replenished by nature, nurtured by respect, and invigorated by effort. No cell phones, no homework. Just a place where local kids can discover the joy of an oar, an island, the open water, and a few hours a week to make sense of the world – with a little help from their friends.