



RIGHT PLACE, RIGHT TIME, RIGHT ATTITUDE
 — MAY 17, 2023

There’s nothing more daunting than deciding what career path to choose. Some young people are lucky and just *know*, others not so much... Either way, if you feel like you have a choice, you’re one of the lucky ones.

For each of the stopovers of The Ocean Race 2022-23, 11th Hour Racing Team is supporting a local grassroots organization to drive positive change and take action for ocean health and local communities as part of our legacy grantee program.



Here in Newport, we met with our hometown Legacy Grantee, [Conanicut Island Sailing Foundation](#) (CISF). Following the four key values of opportunity, education, stewardship and youth development, CISF is responsible for creating a pilot program designed to build the marine trades workforce from within Rhode Island as well as providing more choice of work for a group of typically under-served high school and young adults from Providence.

Because it's important to remember, not everyone feels they have a choice.

Newport (and Rhode Island in general) has gained fame and recognition globally for its relationship to sailing for many reasons. Whether it's the rich maritime history, ideal geographical location, scenic beauty or sailing services and industry infrastructure – this is arguably the US capital of sailing (and many would argue, including our skipper Charlie Enright, the global capital of sailing).



So why is it that so many young people haven't ever touched a sailing boat, let alone been sailing?

"It has been remarkable to understand all the obstacles young people face, particularly those from under-represented communities," explains Meg Myles, Executive Director of CISF. *"This project was born out of Rhode Island's application for a [Blue Economy Grant](#), as an organization we wanted to see how we could fit in. It was obvious to us that the marine trade desperately needs younger and more diverse people coming into it – so we set about solving that problem. Most of the local kids we work with today haven't even touched a boat and it's time for that to change."*

Clearly not a problem that would be solved overnight, Meg and her project partners [Youth Build](#) and [Movement Education Outdoors](#) (MEO) decided to focus on one of the main barriers to entry: lack of awareness and exposure to the industry.



How do you bring people into a world they feel excluded from, or don't even know exists?

“These are kids who have fallen out of the high school system for a variety of reasons and have managed to make their way back to Youth Build or MEO. They have huge potential but just need direction, and I hope that through the platform we provide, and with the help of 11th Hour Racing Team, we are able to open their eyes to options they perhaps wouldn’t have even considered before,” continues Meg. “Step one is to introduce them to this world, but step two is ensuring they infiltrate it, tackling this issue of lack of perceived representation and encouraging inclusivity.

“When I watched [Shaped By Water](#) [a recently released film by the team’s title partner, 11th Hour Racing], it really resonated with me what [Zandi Ndhlovu](#) said about inclusion, and the power of seeing yourself in others. And the consequence of when you don’t fit in, being lost and not necessarily knowing where or how to ask for help. We’re really trying to change that.”



Beyond supporting CISF in their program, the Newport stopover of The Ocean Race was the perfect opportunity to introduce these students to our team, and more importantly, the team behind the team. Those with accessible marine industry roles requiring broad skill sets such as our electricians, boat builders, and riggers.

Don't think about what you don't know. Think about what you do.

Among those welcoming the students is Fin Clark, shore crew and the youngest member of 11th Hour Racing Team.

At just 24 years old, Fin guided the group through a boat tour and Q&A. *"It feels surreal to be standing here giving this tour,"* he says. *"It wasn't that long ago that I was being mentored and supported myself by people in the industry."*



"The platform that CISF is providing is so important. If it wasn't for the time that other people in the industry back in Europe voluntarily gave me, I wouldn't be where I am today. Better, and more diverse representation at all levels can only be a good thing and this is an industry where you can start at the bottom and work your way up, you just have to be given that initial introduction. You don't 'need' to be from a certain kind of background to love your job and do it well."

*"You can show up and know nothing but as long as you bring the right attitude and willingness to the table – that's all that matters. Don't think about what you **don't know**, think about what you **do know**. Think 'what can I do to help here?'"*



Changing tack

One young man by the name of Joshua Duran was particularly influenced by the experience. A construction worker from Providence, Rhode Island, he was informed of the program by his friend who had already participated in one of the previous trips.

“I’ve never seen anything like this before,” he says, standing outside the 11th Hour Racing Team Base after a Q&A with Francesca Clapcich. *“When we were being shown around I was like ‘whoa, what is this – a rocket ship?’*



“One thing I’ve really learnt today is how a project like this comes together. I like the idea of the importance of teamwork, where everyone’s job matters, no matter how big or small. I work in construction right now but I’m thinking about making a change. Working in the marine industry could be really interesting from what I’ve seen.”

“It was just really great hearing about the different ways in which people get into the industry, it makes you realize that it’s an option.”



Working with organizations like CISF brings a lasting legacy to the team for many years to come. Although we are only ‘home’ for a short time in Newport – just ten days from arrival to departure – hosting these young adults who may become future of the marine industry here in Rhode Island has been a privilege. We look forward to following their progress over the coming years. If you work in the marine industry in Rhode Island and wish to support CISF, please visit their website at <https://www.jamestownsailing.org/>

