

Skipper Sets Sail for CLF: Take a “Bow” Phil Kurczewski

Phil Kurczewski (Ker-CHEW-ski) is a life-long Detroit area resident. Raised on the east side of Detroit, he grew up in that eastside atmosphere of water and boats that many westsiders just don't get. Phil also grew up in a home where his mother was ill with cancer, so opportunities for water recreation were pretty limited. Phil's mother died when he was 15.

About 20 years ago, Phil, now 53, decided to make up for lost time and took up sailing. His latest boat is a 25-foot sloop rigged sailboat called “Thunder Chicken” which was purchased 10 years ago.

Fast forward to 2004. Phil was driving along in his car listening to the WCSX-CLF Radiothon and the Stone Soup



house or docks, on a sunny June week-end they met at the Markley Marina in Harrison Township with nine CLF families who were eager to participate. Volunteer boat owners were paired up with families and everyone got a chance to get out on the lake. When they returned, they enjoyed an afternoon picnic and barbeque at the marina.

According to Kurczewski, it was great, so great in fact that he decided to do it again the following year. But the second year was different. Phil began early to get sponsors and donations. His employer, Arkema Inc., again agreed to be a sponsor. One of the sailing club members had wholesale food connections for the picnic. Markley Marina was eager to once again be involved. And on Father's Day week-end of 2005, some 14 families enjoyed a day on the water.

The group is now approaching their third year and Phil is expecting some 16 to 18 families to participate. Additional sponsors are anticipated and several other sailing clubs have expressed an interest in participating.

“At first everyone thinks an event like this is so hard to do, but people are so eager to help out and so generous with their time and money that it's really pretty easy,” says Phil.

So what does it feel like to be the captain of such a joy-generating event?

“It's hard to describe,” says Phil. “It's a nice warm feeling. Everyone is having such a great time, and all of a sudden an ice cream truck drives by and all these kids are laughing and running to the truck and the best part is that you couldn't even tell these kids had cancer.”

“It's when you get home and remember that moment that it really gets to you.”

In 2004, Kurczewski was named “Yachter of the Year” by the Albatross Yacht Club for his efforts for CLF.

CLF salutes “Captain Kurczewski” for those efforts as well. Thanks, Captain...



Dianne Malesko, Deanna Beatty, Alan LaRue, Greg Beatty, and Phil Kurczewski

project. As he listened to the many stories from CLF families, patients and kids, he was struck by how much he could identify with families whose normal recreational activities were curtailed by the illness of a family member. Phil immediately headed over to Oakland Mall where he did two things: First, he purchased several raffle tickets on the Stone Soup project car; and second, he proposed involving CLF families in some sailing adventures.

After discussions with CLF, it was proposed that Kurczewski would offer sailing outings through his sailing club, the Albatross Yacht Club, on the Clinton River. The club members agreed to the plan. And Phil's employer, Arkema, Inc., a chemical company, agreed to sponsor. While the 45-member yacht club had no club