



A Personal Example from Youth Sailor to Board Member

Welcome to the Board our new member, **Kate Gehrs**. She is a certified Level 1 Small Boat Sailing Instructor with US Sailing and joins the Board as our Youth Racing Advisor. We are grateful and excited to have Kate join the Board. Kate brings sailing expertise and perspective from her experiences as a competitive youth sailor. Her history of learning to sail as a young girl developed into her understanding and passion for sailing education. **Kate brings a personal example of youth sailing sustainability to the Treasure Valley.** Below is a look into Kate's sailing experience.

Ahoy! My name is Kate Gehrs, and I am a SISO sailing instructor and the newest member of the SISO Board. I moved to Boise in 2019 from the east coast but grew up in Houston, TX, where I caught the sailing bug at a young age. **My first sailing memory was when I was five years old, lying on my belly at the bow of a Sunfish on Galveston Bay, my mom at the helm, letting the waves splash over my head.** By the next summer, at age six, I was racing my own sailboat!

As a young kid, sailing made me feel strong and independent. On land, I was responsible for rigging and maintaining my own boat. Then on water, I was free! I learned how to make my own decisions based on the wind and waves; how to strategize and navigate a fleet of 100+ other young sailors; how to respect my own boat and other boats around me; and most of all, how to enjoy friendly competition.

I qualified to join the US Sailing Optimist National Team at age thirteen, opening many new doors to the sailing world. I met new teammates from around the country and had the opportunity to travel across the US and even to Nieuwpoort, Belgium, to represent the United States at the Flanders Youth Regatta on the North Sea. Racing against other youth from different nationalities in a foreign country, without my parents, was one of my most impactful childhood experiences. Talk about a confidence boost!

When I grew out of the Optimist dinghy at age fifteen, I started racing in the doublehanded 420 and singlehanded Laser Radial. While the competition was always fierce, sailing became more about friendships. My best friends were traveling and racing regattas right there with me. Around this time, **I came to appreciate the balance between the chit-chat that occurs on land and the tranquility and silence involved in sailing a boat by yourself.** Sailing can be a great time to practice concentration and reflection, whether the wind is blowing 2 knots or 20 knots.

One of the best parts of sailing is that it truly is a lifetime sport. I took a break from sailing when I attended college, and it wasn't until over a decade later, when I moved to Boise, not knowing a soul, that I found sailing again. I googled "Idaho Sailing," and SISO's sister organization Southern Idaho Sailing Association, popped up. As many know, sailors are among the friendliest people you will ever meet. The Idaho sailing community welcomed me with open arms, and I could not be more grateful!

As a mom of a two-year-old and a 5-month-old, I don't get out on the water as often as I would like, but I still feel like a kid every time I get the chance to sail! I always look forward to the thrill of going fast, the friendly competition, and the opportunity for reflection. **Most of all, I look forward to the days when my kids participate in the SISO sailing camps, catch that same sailing bug, and discover all the adventures it can bring.**



Kate sailing her first regatta on Galveston Bay at age six.



Kate enjoying some sunshine during sailing camp at age ten.



Kate racing a Laser downwind in high school.



Kate participating in an Optimist USNT practice at age thirteen.