Friends,

Last year, Community Rowing celebrated its tenth anniversary in the award-winning Harry Parker Boathouse. Our boathouse has witnessed thousands of lives touched through the sport of rowing. Friendship, fitness, discipline, respect, resilience, confidence, teamwork, achieving one’s personal best- all happen day in and day out at Community Rowing throughout our 40+ programs. This community impact report shares inspiring stories of some of us touched by rowing and our CRI community. There are many more stories to tell.

2018 was also a year of transition—Ted Benford was promoted to executive director after a thorough nationwide search—we are thrilled to have him at the helm. And after ten years serving in a volunteer leadership capacity at CRI, with the last eight as board president, I am stepping off the board to welcome in new leadership. Serving on the board has been very gratifying and it has been an honor to serve this wonderful community. I would especially like to thank my fellow board members, trustees, staff, coaches, parents and rowers who put their confidence in me to help steer CRI these past eight years. As we well know, it takes a team. And what a privilege it is to be a part of CRI’s team. Everyone plays a role in CRI’s continued success.

Since CRI was founded in 1985, we have made tremendous strides toward fulfilling our mission of transforming lives through providing access to the sport of rowing. We have come a long way since our days in the skating rink- CRI is a mature, $5.5M organization. Now, the organization we have built aims to fine-tune its operations and finances so that our programs and community can continue to fulfill its mission with a strong foundation for years to come.

CRI is indeed an incredibly special community. Enjoy reading the touching stories in the pages that follow. Each story was possible because of our collective caring, passion and stewardship for this, our rowing home.


With heartfelt gratitude,

Lila McCain
Hello CRI!

Like so many things at CRI, we are constantly updating, changing, innovating. This year we’ve put down our annual report in lieu of sharing a statement of CRI’s impact on the lives of those we serve. As you read on, our hope is that the stories included may inspire you to reflect on how CRI and the sport of rowing has had an impact on your life and the incredible community that we embrace.

I’m so proud to lead an organization that interprets its mission with such energy and strength of purpose. The other day, I was walking through the main floor in the late afternoon when seemingly hundreds of high school athletes of all backgrounds and experience levels were transitioning into or out of practice. They embodied the very best of what we can bring to each other - respect, smiling cooperation, and enthusiasm for anyone who chooses to stand with us under the roof of this incredible boathouse. CRI’s youth programs have improved the lives of so many kids and their families, and are a compelling reminder that CRI isn’t just another boat club - we are a community dedicated to sharing the lessons and potential transformation that rowing can bring to anyone who wishes to join us - without regard to individual ability, background or experience.

We rowers are ambitious. We strive for excellence, sometimes against incredible odds, often learning the extent of our reach by exceeding it, and by letting our imagination of what’s possible be determined not by our own expectations but by trusting others “in the boat” to bring out the best in us - a “best” we could not imagine we possessed. CRI is known around the world as an incubator of thought leadership, an ambitious model for public access and, I hope, for our generous spirit.

As you will see in Richie’s story, Lia’s reflections and the excitement around our middle school indoor program, we make a difference in the lives of those we serve on a myriad of levels. We are a collective of rowers and non-rowers who are enriched and inspired by the caring and commitment we make to the mission of “Rowing For All.” I am thrilled to lead our efforts with a strong awareness of our history and deep caring for the community we all serve. I invite you to read on to learn about some of the remarkable stories that live among us and why these rowers chose CRI to be their “home away from home.”

Thank you and I hope to see you at the boathouse soon!

Ted Benford
Imagine 5,000 10- to 15-year olds erging away—that’s how successful CRI’s Boston Middle School Indoor Rowing Program has been. The program’s mission is accessibility to rowing and the promotion of healthy lifestyles, and 2018 was a year of outstanding results:

> An impressive 40 schools, in every Boston neighborhood, were program partners.
> CRI hosted the 2nd annual Youth Erg International Trials (YETI) at Roxbury’s Reggie Lewis Center. Over 1,200 students enjoyed this grand celebration of youth rowing.
> Schools responded so positively to the program that the allocation of ergs was increased to meet demand. CRI’s Boston Middle School Program makes “rowing for all” a reality for thousands of public school students across our city.

In four weeks, many students not only get introduced to rowing, but express their desire to pursue it as their sport. The CRI coaches create an atmosphere of fun, friendly competition.

- Ruben Carrizosa,
Sumner Elementary School

**MIDDLE SCHOOL PROGRAM**

**BY GEOFF KRONIK**

Our students love the workout during the cold winter in Mattapan and develop enthusiasm for rowing. When they compete, they cheer so loudly that we have to signal to them to keep their voices down.

- Sadie Soto-Applegate & Kevin Gadson,
Mildred Ave Middle School

Photograph by Ella Buitrago
When CRI military rower Richie Derle talks about rowing, he does something he rarely used to do. He smiles. He smiles when he remembers his first day on the water. “I was so scared. I said, ‘if I fall in, I’m never coming back.’ But someone told me, ‘Rich, you can walk across this pond, it’s not deep. Don’t worry.’” Richie smiles even more when he talks about the people he rows with. “Oh, they’re great. Everybody gets up at 4 AM to be here, and we even row in the rain. If someone told me I’d be getting up at four to row in the rain, I’d have said they were nuts. My daughter keeps asking, why do you do that?” Richie knows exactly why. He gets up and rows, rain or shine, because rowing gave him back something that had been missing from his life for forty years. “I served in the Marine Corps in California from 1973 to 1975. My friends, they went to Vietnam but they never came back. After I got out, I didn’t have close contact with anyone. You know, you don’t want to get hurt again.” Life wasn’t easy for Richie after his discharge. “There was alcohol and drugs, and I lived on the street for a while. But then I got married.” He pauses, looks away and says, “I don’t know—I have no idea why my wife married me. I guess she must have seen something I didn’t. Everything took off from there. We bought a house, I worked 42 years managing a cemetery for the city of Boston, and I have four kids and nine grandchildren.” But something was still missing. “All that time,” Richie says, “I still didn’t have any friends.” That would change in 2016, thanks to CRI Military Program Coordinator Marilyn Koblan. Richie had started visiting the gym at the Bedford VA. “I looked in the mirror and said, ‘you have to do something.’ Being retired, the weight doesn’t come off as quickly.” One day he met Marilyn in the gym and she asked if he was interested in rowing. “I’d never done anything like that, but I tried it and I liked it. The camaraderie, it’s like when I was back in the Marine Corps. I’ve been doing it ever since, and I feel like I have some friends now. It gave me a lot of confidence, and I’ve gone on to bigger and better things.” Bigger and better is an understatement. Last fall, Richie raced in an eight in the CRI Fall Classic, and a month later rowed a double in the Head of the Charles.

For ten years, CRI’s Military Program, through the transformative power of rowing, has helped retired and returning active duty servicemen and service-women, as well as active duty and Gold Star spouses, adjust to life as a civilian or post-deployment. They train and receive coaching free of charge at CRI, in gratitude for the sacrifices they have made. But if you ask CRI Military Rower Richie Derle, rowing means much more than just training, racing and staying fit. Thanks to CRI, he’s found the kind of friendships he thought he would never have again. “My wife sees me smile a whole lot more than I used to,” Richie says. And as if to prove the point, he grins.
The community at CRI has given me tremendous joy and support since I became a member in 1985, but never more so than when my daughter, Karen Douglas, died in October 2013. Even after the passage of five and a half years, this is a subject about which I find it very difficult to write. Karen never leaves my mind. She would have been 23 this year.

Karen picked up rowing at CRI in her freshman year in high school, rapidly rose in ranks and was selected to travel to Germany the summer of 2012 with the U.S. Junior National team. She was a natural rower and demonstrated great discipline, grit and team camaraderie. What many didn’t know is that Karen also suffered from depression and bulimia. Karen’s time rowing with CRI helped keep her healthy, connected and strong – and I am so grateful.

Karen left rowing however to focus on her recovery. Then in October 2013, her senior year of high school, she suddenly went missing. The CRI community rapidly swung into action posting flyers all over town and social media to help with her search. Karen’s body was found two days later. She had taken her life by suicide.

The most unimaginable of life events is the death of a child. I have never felt such darkness. During the worst period of my life, the CRI community caught me, brought me back from emotional free fall, and helped me to heal. It’s not just muscle that gets the job done, it’s spirit and community.

My husband, Peter Beaman, and I decided to give in Karen’s memory out of gratitude and love for CRI. Our gift means a great deal to us. We named a boat from the new 2015 fleet for Karen; a 4+ which her teammates inaugurated with a race at Junior Nationals in Sarasota, Florida that year. To see her friends make Karen’s boat fly was simply wonderful.

Knowing that Karen’s boat is rowed every day keeps her spirit alive and is just but a small token of my gratitude to this very special community.
Events

Holiday Party
The community came together at the Harry Parker Boathouse on December 15, 2018, to celebrate a fantastic year of rowing at CRI. Organized by the Institute for Rowing Leadership Fellows, the event was a huge success, featured rowing-inspired décor, and enjoyed by all.

For more information on community events like this, see the CRI calendar at www.communityrowing.org/about/cri-calendar

Spring Fundraising Gala
We came together on May 9th in support of Community Rowing and the transformational stories woven throughout the fiber of our organization. Thanks to our generous donors who attended the event or bid on auction items remotely, we raised nearly $80,000 for our community! It was a fantastic evening of celebration and we have immense gratitude for everyone involved.

Save the Date!
Join us at the 10th CRI Fall Classic Regatta in support of all our inclusion programs. September 21, 2019 Harry Parker Boathouse | The Charles River
Clockwise from top right: Youth Competitive Girls, Corporate Barge Row, Boston Children’s Hospital Optimum Wellness for Life (OWL) rowers, Adult General Sweeps, Youth Competitive Boys, High Performance Scullers, Youth Competitive Girls.

Photographs by Damian Strohmeyer

Photograph courtesy of Sandra Cardillo

Photograph by Ella Buitrago
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Thank you to all of our funders!
Row Boston girls practicing in the 4+ for Fall racing
CRI’s Para athletes Pearl Outlaw and Josh Ehrenmeier representing the USA in the PR3 Mixed 2x race at the 2018 World Rowing Championships in Plovdiv, Bulgaria

Photograph courtesy of USRowing
Single sculler launches for a morning row from the CRI docks

Photograph by Damian Strohmeyer