

Logan Martin Homes Edition

# LAKESIDE *Living*

► **RIDING THE WIND  
AT THE BIRMINGHAM  
SAILING CLUB**

► **SUMMER EVENTS:  
The Block Party and the Poker Run**

July 2024

# Contents



## FEATURES

- 10** A Visit to Junior Sailing Camp
- 18** At the Riverside Poker Run
- 28** Pizza Pies and Ice Cream
- 36** 25 Years of the Hometown Block Party
- 52** A Lakeside Institution That's Older Than the Lake

Hook, Line & Sinker.....	8	Lakeside Featured Property.....	78
Meet Me By the Lake.....	42	Lakeside Agent Spotlight.....	80
Lakeside Flora & Fauna.....	48		
Calendar.....	68		



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On the cover: Erin Sides, Kyla Thompson, and Sophie Casey enjoy a morning of sailing on Logan Martin Lake. Photo by Buddy Roberts

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**LAKE**SIDE  
*Living*

*Covering life along  
 Logan Martin Lake since 1994*

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# SUDDENLY SUSAN



## LEARNING LIFE LESSONS WHILE SAILING ON LOGAN MARTIN LAKE

BSC Junior Sailing Camp trains aspiring captains and crew members



Written by **SUSAN COOK**  
Photographed by **BUDDY ROBERTS**

I was 29 years old before I had my first sailing lesson. What I thought was going to be a calm day of sailing in the Caribbean turned into a sweat-drenched crash course in the not-so-simple art of sailboat racing.

By the end, I was sunburned and thirsty, my hands red and tingling from the burn of the ropes I was in charge of manning. But mostly, I was brimming with sheer adrenaline and happiness. There's nothing quite like the thrill of scudding across a rippling body of water with nothing but the

wind driving you forward. I only had one regret: Why hadn't I gone sailing sooner?

The kids and teenagers participating in the Birmingham Sailing Club's Junior Sailing Camp thankfully won't have that regret.

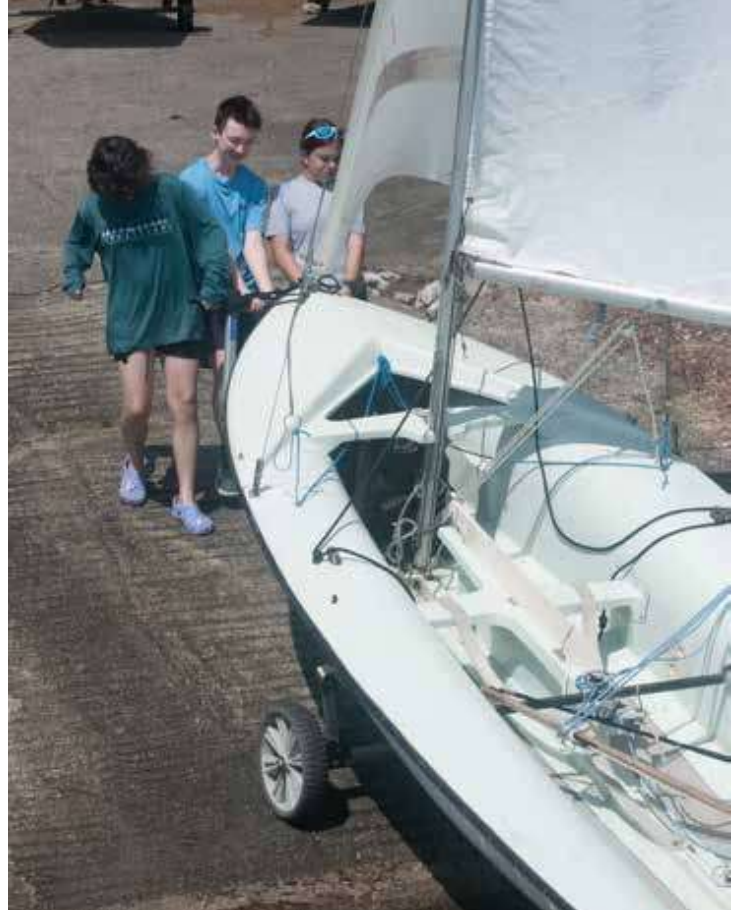
This was my first visit to the Birmingham Sailing Club, housed in a tidy white building with floor-to-ceiling windows overlooking a sloping green field leading to the lake below. Incorporated in 1963, ironically before the creation of Logan Martin Lake, the sailing club is a non-profit organization situated on nine acres of land located about two miles above Logan Martin

Dam. Here, the lake is roughly one mile wide allowing for ideal sailing conditions.

As I made my way down the hill towards the docks, I heard the kids before I saw them. Laughter, shrieks, and splashing echoed all around as the campers cooled off in the lake--the sounds of summer.

I met Amy Sides, the camp organizer, midway down the hill where she filled me in on the history and goals of the Junior Sailing Camp. This year, 22 young sailors attended the camp, ranging in age between 8 and 18. About half were first-timers, and the other were return campers.





Sophie Casey, Kyla Thompson, and Erin Sides prepare, launch, and board a 420 class sailboat on the Birmingham Sailing Club's shoreline.



Each year, the young sailors learn how to rig a boat and tie knots, with the camp leaders prepping them in safety measures for the exciting moment when they first steer their small craft around the docks and ultimately maneuver a sailing course.

As skill levels progress, the campers are offered a chance to level up while still reviewing the skills learned in prior levels. When not learning to sail, the kids are taught to hone their skills through fun yet competitive games, demonstrations, and drills both on and off the water.

I quickly discovered on my visit to the Junior Sailing Camp that it's more than just a place to learn sailing; it's a close-knit community where young sailors grow their abilities and gain confidence while also challenging themselves.

I got a chance to see these qualities in action as I spent time with three of the camp's best sailors: Erin Sides (age 18), Sophie Casey (age 18), and Kyla Thompson (age 15).

Erin, the daughter of Amy Sides, has been sailing the longest, revealing "My first sailing camp was in 2016, but I've been sailing pretty much since I was born."

Schoolmates with Erin at Indian Springs High School for a time, Sophie is the next most experienced sailor, while Kyla is the most recent. That being said, this year marks her third sailing camp.

Although there was only the slightest whiff of a breeze, there was just enough to give them hope for a sail.

"How long does it take to prep a boat?" I ask Erin as we walk towards the row of dinghies.

"We can do it in about 10 minutes," Erin responded,



“although it depends on the experience of the sailors.”

True to her word, in a matter of roughly 10 minutes, the trio worked seamlessly together to raise the sail and rig the boat. All that remained was to see if there was enough wind to actually set sail.

As they wheeled the boat towards the dock, I asked Erin the obligatory question: “What’s your favorite part of sailing?”

Her response was quick but assured: “I like that sailing is a good way for me to hang out with my friends, and I get to teach them things. I like that I know what to do when I see something going wrong. I also just like rigging and tying knots. I love tying knots actually.”

Sophie and Kyla share Erin’s passion for sailing and agree that learning to sail gives them confidence. The fact that you can be good enough at maneuvering the boat and reckoning with the changeable wind and water is inspiring to all three. To determine a point in the distance and think, I want to go there, and then actually make that happen is a powerful feeling.

Sophie and Kyla are the first two in the boat, followed ultimately by Erin who lightly hopped into the stern, taking control of the rudder.

I glance down for a moment to make a note, and when I look up they are almost to the middle of the lake. What seemed like the smallest of breezes was enough to send them swiftly skimming across the glass-like surface of the sun-drenched lake.

I’d like to say that I helped rig up a sailboat and set off



after them, but I'm a few lessons short of being able to do that, to say the least. Instead, Amy cranked up a nearby motorboat and we zipped our way towards the middle of the lake.

As we got closer, I could see Erin, Sophie, and Kyla perched like sea birds on the narrow white sides of their 420 dinghy. Laughter and low conversation rippled across the water, and from time to time, Erin would calmly direct traffic to "jibe" or "tack" and together they would maneuver to change their course. They looked like three teenagers on a grand adventure, going wherever they wanted the breeze to take them.

There's an art and a science to sailing. Learning this ancient skill teaches sailors, no matter their age, how to quickly troubleshoot and find a solution to whatever problem might arise. Sailors learn to remain calm when something goes wrong, not letting it escalate or alarm others. Valuable skills you take with you in life even when you're not sailing.

Who knows what the future holds for the 22 young sailors at this year's Junior Sailing Camp? Many will return next year while others, like Erin, are moving on to college. But the friendships forged during this week are strong, and the skills they've developed will serve them well wherever life takes them. I'm still a rookie at trying to harness the wind, but you're never too young or too old to learn something new and see where the wind takes you.

If you're interested in learning more about the Birmingham Sailing Club and the adult and junior classes it offers, be sure to visit [birminghamclub.org](http://birminghamclub.org).