



BY Susan Nye PHOTOS BY Dave Kynor

ROWING at Hanover High School

LEARNING, GROWING, AND COMPETING TOGETHER

It began 20 years ago when a group of girls came forward. Call it girl power or a smart choice to become more physically fit—30 students at Hanover High School wanted to row. Starting a new sports program is never easy, and crew brings some additional complexities. There is the equipment, which is extensive and expensive. Plus you need a home, preferably near the water, to store and launch your boats. And finally, you need a coach.

With the help of their parents, the girls found

a coach. Longtime rower Peter Kermond was approached and accepted the challenge. A former member of the US Men's Lightweight National Team, Peter has competed and medaled nationally and internationally. In addition to his passion for the sport, Peter manufactures custom rowing products, and his connections throughout the Upper Valley and the rowing industry were critical to making it all happen. With his help, the team was able to find enough used boats and equipment to launch a club.



“Unlike soccer or basketball, **rowing is new to all our students.** There are no child-sized boats, so no one enters the program with eight or ten years of experience. **Almost everyone joins the team as a novice.**” —Julie Stevenson, Dean of Students



Opposite: The girls’ novice team seems to enjoy the team photo session.
Top: Two of the varsity girls pull hard near the end of a tight race.
Above: Getting the boat up to speed after the start requires teamwork.





Opposite, from top: Mid-race concentration. Girls dig deep during a race against Tabor Academy. Boys feel the pain during the later stages of the race.

This page, from top: The coxswain is in charge of the boat during the race. Girls' novice boat swings together.



Dartmouth generously agreed to let the girls use their dock, the only caveat being that the club could not interfere with the college's practices or races. Rain or shine, the Hanover students took to the water in the early morning. Without a boathouse, the Hanover boats were stored on trailers so they could be moved easily when visiting teams came to compete against Dartmouth. Additional equipment, replacement parts, and tools were stored in their parents' and coaches' SUVs and garages.

The club gained a second coach when Julie Stevenson joined the crew club in 1998. An accomplished athlete, Julie rowed all through high school and college. During her senior year at Dartmouth, she both captained the women's team, winning a gold medal at the Henley Women's Regatta, and did her student teaching at Hanover High School. After college, she taught history and coached crew in Connecticut before earning a master's degree in administration.

When a job came up at the high school, she jumped at the chance to return to Hanover. Julie says, "I was so glad it worked out. I love Hanover and working here. It's a great place to live, teach, and coach." Nineteen years later, Julie is now Dean of Students.

A Club Becomes a Sport

Hanover High School requires any budding team to start out as a club and run for at least two years before it can gain varsity status. Those early days were busy. Together, Julie and Peter coached the girls and helped start the Friends of Hanover Crew (FOHC). Comprised of parents, coaches, and interested rowers, FOHC's key goal was to raise funds to buy badly needed equipment.

After maintaining a clear commitment with about 40 girls, the club became a varsity spring sport in 2000. Julie became head coach, and Peter stayed on to coach the novice girls. Under Julie's guidance, the team has

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become a full member of the prestigious New England Interscholastic Rowing Association. Hanover's boats are now regulars in the grand finals.

Hanover crew continued to grow, and before long, a boys' team was added. Peter took on the varsity boys and additional coaches joined the program. With 130 to 140 members, close to 20 percent of the student body, crew is now the largest sport at the high school. "We are lucky to have a great group of coaches," says Julie. "Most have been involved with the program for some time. They are so talented and so good at what they do."

There are a lot of moving parts in a crew program, especially one as large as Hanover High School's. Managing those moving parts got a little easier a few years ago. After almost two decades of rowing off the Dartmouth dock, Hanover Crew finally managed to acquire its own boathouse and dock. Julie says, "This spring will be our third season in our new home. Dartmouth was very good to us, but it is wonderful to have everything in one place, stored and safe." The boathouse is on land adjacent to the town's Wilson's Landing. FOHC raised the money to purchase the land and built the boathouse as well as a dock that has been gifted to the town.

Creating a Rhythm

There is a wonderful camaraderie among the team members. Rowing attracts both athletes and kids who want to try something new. Julie likes that about the sport. She says, "Unlike soccer or basketball, rowing is new to all our students. There are no child-sized boats, so no one enters the program with eight or ten years of experience. Almost everyone joins the team as a novice."

The goal is to create a rhythm, one movement with eight people. There are no superstars, no Michael Jordan or Serena Williams. Only the coxswain speaks, guiding and motivating the crew. Julie says, "Crew is



Splashing water highlights this rower in the late afternoon.

“Crew is the ultimate full-body workout and the ultimate team sport. There are no benchwarmers and no mid race substitutions. **Everyone crosses the finish line together.”**

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Lucas Adams-Blackmore, a senior at Hanover High School and one of the crew captains, agrees. “Rowing is an incredible workout and there is a team bonding that you don’t find in other sports. It’s eight people working together with the coxswain. You all have to be on the same page.”

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Blair Brooks coaches the novice boys. "It is fantastic to see these ninth and tenth graders take to the sport," he says. "Most have never seen a boat or an oar before." Blair continues, "It can be quite chaotic. There are all these kids; they're all at the same place—the beginning. They learn together and grow together, and in about a month, it's amazing, they compete in their first race."

Along with teamwork and a healthy lifestyle, rowers develop a special relationship with the outdoors. "The Connecticut River is a wonderful resource. We are so lucky to live here. Students soon come to appreciate how special this place is," says Julie. "Rowers see the sun rise or set, hear the loons' calls, and watch the bald eagles. We find the students quickly gain a new appreciation for nature. They care about the river and the environment."

Off the water, crew helps students in the classroom and life. Lucas says, "Rowing has helped me become more productive. During the season, I'm much better at delegating my time." Lucas is off to college next year and hopes to pursue a career in medicine. He expects to continue rowing, probably at the club level.

Blair adds, "The kids grow as athletes and as teammates, but they also grow as human beings. They're teenagers; by definition, many are confused when they come into the program. They're not sure who they are or who they want to be. Crew helps them find their way." ←

Susan Nye lives in New Hampshire and writes for magazines throughout New England. She shares many of her favorite recipes and stories about family, friendship, and food on her award-winning blog at www.susannye.wordpress.com.



ONLINE EXTRA

To see more photos of the Hanover Crew team, visit www.hereinhanover.com.