President’s 2014 Message

Vesper Boat Club's acceptance of the USRowing's Club of the Year award is accompanied by a heartfelt and sincere thank you to all of those who made this award possible.  For the past ten years since the completion of the boat house restoration, Vesper has been working towards strengthening and developing the club and the rowing community on both the local and national levels.

Keeping with the clubs mission of excellence and development, Vesper enjoyed a great year of results both on the national as well as international level. Vesper won both the men’s and women’s overall team trophies at the USRowing Club National Championships for the second consecutive year. Additionally, Vesper hosted the selection camp for the Senior Lightweight Women’s Quad and sent four athletes, two of whom earned medals, to the Senior World Championships: Mary Jones (LW4x), Grace Latz (bronze medalist, W4x), Vicky Opitz (gold medalist, W8+), and Yohann Rigogne (M1x).

Through working as a collective, over the past year, Vesper Boat Club has taken the initiative to participate in the creation The Schuylkill Navy High Performance Collaborative; conceived by the Schuylkill Navy but brought to life by Vesper's Joanne Iverson.  The collaborative seeks to promote a level of cooperation in which resources and programs are shared between clubs of boathouse row. This has strengthened the results from each and every program and the recognition that the rowing community’s presence in Philadelphia could be significantly strengthened. For example, the composite crew of Nick Goode (VBC) and Charlie Biddle (Undine Barge Club) placed 4th at NSR 2 in the Men’s 2x, and the composite crew of Esther Lofgren (Potomac Boat Club), Nicole Ritchie (VBC), Mary Maginnis (VBC), and Lindsay Meyer (Seattle Rowing Center) placed 1st in the Women’s 4x at Elite Nationals.

Additionally in December, two Vesper members were inducted into the Philadelphia Sports Hall of Fame.  Paul Costello was among the most accomplished rowers ever.  Teaming with John B. Kelly, senior, he won gold medals in the double at both the 1920 and 1924 Olympics.  In 1928 he became the first Olympian to capture the same event three games in succession when he partnered with Charles McIlvaine  to triumph at Amsterdam.  Ellie Daniel’s illustrious swimming career started at Vesper and she proceeded to win four Olympic medals, a gold, a silver and two bronze and two Pan American gold medals.  (Vesper had a swim team in those years.  It was coached by JB’s mother, Mary).

 To keep with the tradition of the Vesper motto “all together”, Vesper makes every effort to support the rowing community both locally and nationally. Currently, Vesper’s membership plays a vital role in the rowing community at all levels of its operation. Currently, Vesper has 6 USRowing Referees, numerous USRowing certified Coaches, along with accomplished coaches as Mike Teti, John Parker, Jim Glavin, Margaret Gordon, and Jamie Gordon who all are a part of the Vesper membership. Additionally, Paul Horvat is a USRowing elected leader along with Joanne Iverson as an appointed committee member. Furthermore, there are a number of Vesper members leading the rowing community in other capacities. John Strotbeck is Founder/CEO of Boathouse Sports, Sean Colgan is President of Power Ten, and Joanne Iverson is Co-Founder of the National Women's Rowing Association. Boyce Budd, Emory Clark, Joe Michels, Don Spero, and John Chatsky are Vesper members who are also National Rowing Foundation Trustees.

Locally, Vesper supports the promotion of the Philadelphia rowing community. Aside from spearheading the previously mentioned collaborative effort, Vesper is an active participant in the Philadelphia City Rowing (PCR) program in all of its functions. Philadelphia City Rowing is an invaluable program that makes rowing available to the children of the Philadelphia City Schools that may not be able to ever gain access to rowing without it. Vesper Boat Club, also, looks to strengthen the already-existing adaptive program on Boathouse Row as part of the Boathouse Row collaborative, with many Vesper members actively participating and supporting the Philadelphia Adaptive Rowing Program.

To open the beautiful Schuylkill River up to rowers all across the country, Vesper has the unique opportunity to work with the Schuylkill Navy, supporting it in the many functions sponsored by it including regattas both on a local and national scale.  While Vesper does not host a regatta directly, in at least two regattas Vesper plays a significant role with the hosting Schuylkill Navy Club. The Head of the Schuylkill Regatta President is Vesper's Ellen Carver.  She is has been a Co-Director of the regatta for the past five years. The Philadelphia Scholastic Rowing Association hosts six weekly high school regattas that have been organized and run in the Spring for 70 schools from four different states by the PSRA President, Vesper's Paul Horvat, for the past ten years. Paul Horvat is also Vice Commodore of the Schuylkill Navy, which runs the Stotesbury Regatta, Schuylkill Navy Regatta, Independence Day Regatta, and the Philadelphia Youth Regatta. In the past year, Vesper was also responsible for two Pre-NSR regattas in which all Schuylkill Navy athletes were invited to compete to prepare for the actual NSR competition, through collaboration between Vesper, The Schuylkill Navy High Performance Collaborative, and all of boathouse row.