



SOUTH SHORE
SEARCH AND RESCUE

Report to our communities

2021, 2022 and 2023

Financial and operational summary

December, 2023

Introduction

This is a report on the activities and financial results for the Grimsby Auxiliary Marine Rescue Unit (operating as South Shore Search And Rescue) for the fiscal years 2021, 2022 and 2023. It is, we believe, a fair representation of the organization's performance during that period and of its financial status as of February 28, 2023.

It would be normal to expect our organization to offer a report such as this on an annual basis. But as our members can attest, this has been far from a normal period. As the following pages demonstrate, our organization has come through a tumultuous period in excellent operational and financial shape.

Three intense years

Like so many organization, South Shore Search And Rescue was heavily impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and its aftermath. Indeed, the activities of the unit mirrored much of the economic and social arc of our region, from severely constrained activities at the height of the pandemic, to robust recovery and, recently, the reality of inflation and how all of our lives have changed since our last report in 2020.

Our fiscal 2021 (March 1, 2020 to February 28, 2021) was a whirlwind of change. A new, purpose-built rescue vessel was ordered late in the year, the culmination of a multi-year fundraising effort. The boat, a 26-foot centre console T-top design from Stanley Aluminum Boats of Parry Sound, Ontario, was built to our specifications over the winter of 2020/21 for delivery in the spring of 2021.

Like other organizations, training and operations underwent significant change to meet the challenges of COVID. Online seminars, guest speakers, small crews training in isolation, donning personal protective equipment before heading out to a rescue — most aspects of our operation were revised or interrupted. Still, crews performed at a high level in difficult circumstances, a tribute to their dedication and training. Fundraising, however, was impacted.

Operationally, the 2020/21 season was the busiest on record despite the COVID restrictions. Crews performed 43 rescue missions during the season. The 2020 season saw 24 lives saved, 27 people assisted and \$188,000 in property recovered, according to the Canadian Coast Guard Auxiliary/Central & Arctic.

Financial highlights

2021

revenue = \$57,136

expenses = \$271,752*

* Includes acquisition of new vessel for delivery in FY 2022

Our fiscal 2022 (March 1, 2021 to February 28, 2022) was another year of adaptation and change with COVID protocols on land and on water disrupting much of our usual activity. The arrival of our new vessel lent an air of excitement to an otherwise difficult season on the water.

Previously, a study of the viability of repairing and refitting our 20+ year old steel cutter found it no longer economical to own and maintain the boat. In light of the arrival of the new boat, the decision was made to sell it while it still had significant value as a used boat, and a buyer was found in due course.

At the same time, we became aware that our aging Zodiac Hurricane 630 rigid-hull inflatable boat (RHIB) was literally at the end of its life: deterioration of a large area of the rigid hull meant the boat was no longer suitable for search and rescue service. Prior to the 2021 season, the difficult decision was made to decommission the boat (the hull belonged to the Canadian Coast Guard Auxiliary while the engines and all equipment belonged to our corporation).

While the new vessel's arrival in early spring provided the opportunity to familiarize crews with their new boat, the decision was taken to delay putting it into service until all crews had been thoroughly trained on its sophisticated systems and technology. Although it only went into service on August 1, 2021, the vessel was called out to 27 rescue missions and covered more than 1,630 nautical miles as it came to the aid of 22 boaters and saved five lives.

Fundraising was predictably impacted during the year but was augmented by a special 'top up' of funds for training from the CCGA/C&A. We are grateful for their support.

Financial highlights

2022

revenue = \$183,759**

expenses = \$91,141*

* Includes final payment and commissioning of new vessel

** Includes one-time supplementary revenue from CCGA/C&A, sale of steel cutter

Our fiscal 2023 (March 1, 2022 to February 28, 2023) began to feel more like normal as health restrictions subsided and recreational boaters flocked to the water in unprecedented numbers. Our new rescue boat would be put to the test.

All new boats undergo a 'shakedown' period as systems are tested and issues are resolved. Following extensive warranty work and further refinement, the vessel earned the respect of crews during some difficult missions that established it as capable and safe. The rush of people new to boating that began in 2021 carried into the 2022 boating season and as a result our crews delivered another record year of rescues on the water. The 43 rescue missions of the season tied the record set in 2020 with 41 individuals assisted, 10 lives saved and more than \$440,000 in property recovered.

Of particular note was a single rescue mission in July that resulted in eight lives saved and a national award bestowed on the dedicated volunteers of D Crew who earned the Canadian Coast Guard Auxiliary national Operational Merit Medal. We are all very proud of Owen Evans (coxswain) and Ben Cosman, both of Grimsby, Brent Dawson of St. Catharines, Sandy Osborne of Beamsville and Jeffrey Stamper of Hamilton.

Fundraising, too, rebounded during the year as both donations and events buoyed our finances. Again, we are grateful to the CCGA/C&A for their contribution.

Financial results, fiscal 2022-2023

GRIMSBY AUXILIARY MARINE RESCUE UNIT		
Statement of Operations Revenue and Expenditures		
(UNAUDITED)		
	Year Ended February 28, 2023	
REVENUE		
	Auction Proceeds	\$ 7,093
	Donations	4,313
	Grants	15,778
	Interest	537
	Memberships	500
	Miscellaneous Fundraising	21,972
	Sale of Motors	9,500
	Taskings	12,247
	Training	74,360
TOTAL REVENUE		146,300
EXPENDITURES		
	Advertising	\$ 334
	Bank, Credit Card and Donation Portal Charges	671
	Boat Stoaage Lift In/Out	2,501
	Equipment	15,367
	Fuel - Unit 240	12,892
	Fundraiser Expenses	502
	Insurance	2,916
	Meetings & Trainings	186
	Office Expense	6,795
	Pagers	769
	Rent, Parking, Utilities	3,145
	Repairs & Mtce - Unit 240	10,359
	Supplies	1,253
TOTAL EXPENSES		57,690
Excess of Revenue over (under) Expenditure		88,611

Other financial developments

The disruption created by the pandemic certainly impacted our financial reporting during the period but it was only one factor in the delay publishing our results.

As part of a routine change of directors following the 2021 Annual General Meeting of the corporation, serious financial irregularities came to the attention of the Board. An outgoing Director admitted to misappropriating corporate funds and offered restitution. The news unleashed a chain of events that continues into fiscal 2024.

In May of this year, our legal counsel filed an Ontario Small Claims Court action against the former Director. That individual re-paid \$5,500 at the time of the discovery, claiming the repayment covered our losses. Our own internal investigation, confirmed by an external, independent auditor, put the actual loss to us at an additional \$17,000. Including our legal and accounting costs, we are asking for restitution of more than \$30,000. That process continues.

When we discovered the loss, needless to say we were shocked, disappointed and angry. Those feelings were quickly replaced by a compelling desire to both recover the lost funds and ensure it could never happen again. We can say with confidence that we have made great progress on both.

The Board of Directors has put in place new, rigorous internal controls and regimes to ensure our funds remain secure. We can assure our community of supporters today that we have excellent financial controls and that our finances are solid and our operations continue uninterrupted.

Our next task is to reassure the generous community of supporters who make it possible for us to save lives on Lake Ontario. It is cold comfort to know that the charitable sector is frequently the target of this kind of activity but we want to reassure our donors that we are good stewards of your generous support and worthy of your trust.

Looking ahead

At the time of writing, the 2023 boating season is complete but there are months left in our fiscal year. We look forward to reporting on the full year in due course.

The personnel and organizational changes from the pandemic period are still being felt through the organization as new systems for crewing, training and other operations are tested and refined. We are comfortable with — and confident in — our rescue vessel. Fundraising has been heavily impacted by personnel changes this year but is expected to improve in time for next season. We are particularly grateful to those donors who have continued to support us over this time, including:

Firehouse Subs Public Safety Foundation of Canada
Niagara Community Foundation
BCM Insurance
Canadian Coast Guard Auxiliary/Central & Arctic
Don & Wendy Smith/Smith Funeral Homes

The legal action to recover missing funds will continue to be our highest priority.

Another lingering issue has still to be resolved. The organization is in need of a permanent facility for storage of our vessels and equipment. Plans have been made and capital allocated to this project but we have yet to find a site to host the portable modular structure we envision. We continue to engage with the municipalities and communities we serve as we seek to add this missing element to our organization.

The past three years have arguably tested our organization in ways we could not have imagined prior to COVID. But it has also proven the operational strength of the organization, the commitment of our volunteers and the depth of our financial resources. We can assure the communities we serve that our organization has never been stronger or better placed to continue saving lives on Lake Ontario.

For the Board of Directors,



Doug Mepham
Unit Leader
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