

St. Michael the Archangel Award: Setting a course to the weakest

Their name is Doppia Vela Sailing Team, and they are a group of police officer with a passion for sailing. A few years ago they have turned this passion into a positive action: helping young people who live in social unease and make them "change course":

Their project, called "Doppia Vela Solidale", which now is yielding concrete results, got the patronage of the National Police and was awarded on the occasion of the celebrations for the patron saint of the police organization St. Michael the Archangel.

The promoters of this initiative are the police officers Domenico Caruso and Stefano Rattazzi, who received the "St. Michael the Archangel Award" - now in its third edition - at the Teatro Comunale in Ferrara, on September 29.

Their merit is having promoted sailing to help teens who are struggling with mental illness and social problems.

"Our goal is to transfer our passion for sailing to these young people and in particular to show them a way they can follow in the future", say the two cops-skippers. "Given the positive results we have achieved, what we hope is that the project will be shared also by other Italian institutions", adds Domenico.

The most recent experiences are those made on Lake Garda: 3 groups - 25 teens in total - after some theoretical lessons, made 10 group trips on 2 different boats, provided by private individuals or associations. The sailing trips were intended to make the children develop an awareness of their role in a team activity, rediscovering the values of living in a community, respecting the rules and the environment. On board, beside the skipper-cop, there were a professional mentor and a psychologist.

The experiences of Giovanni and Fabio

Here are the stories of two mothers who have had an opportunity to live this experience together with their children:

"Giovanni, who is 15 years old, lost his father when he was 7 and since then - tells his mother Giuliana - he has not been the same. Nervous, angry, without certainties. I learned of this project from the professional mentor of my village Brentino Belluno (Verona) and it seemed something interesting which would have given Giovanni a stimulus to overcome his unease.

With great sacrifices I brought him to Peschiera, 40 km from my house, but I noticed some positive results from the very beginning. For the first time Giovanni was truly keen on something and each time he came back with the boat he had a smile on his face and was a lot more relaxed. Domenico and the other staff members have always been really helpful and understanding and I think Giovanni will continue with this experience at least for next year."

Fabio instead is 23. He has socialization problems and is so afraid of making mistakes. Yet, twice a month, accompanied by his parents, he went to the lake to follow the theoretical lessons given by our uniformed voluntary officers and went sailing as well.

"We live a few kilometres away from Peschiera - tells on the phone Luisa, Fabio's mother - and I take

him there willingly because he meets people like him, who have problems, even if of different types. He interacts with them without any difficulty, socializing and having fun."

"In a good weather they went sailing several times and when he came back it was such a pleasure to see him happy. We hope we can continue with this experience."

Italian version

St. Micheal the Archangel video

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