



## NEWS RELEASE

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### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Media Contact:**

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- WHAT:** 2010 Championship Regatta - Southeast Regional Youth Rowing  
**WHEN:** Saturday, May 8<sup>th</sup> - 8am to 6pm; Sunday, May 9<sup>th</sup> - 8am to Noon  
**WHERE:** Nathan Benderson Park, University Parkway and I-75 (Exit 213)  
**WHO:** Over 1,500 Athletes from 5 States  
(Alabama, Florida, Georgia, North Carolina and Tennessee)  
**WHY:** Catch The Rowing Excitement!

### **1,500 Youth Participating in Southeastern Regional Rowing Championship This Weekend; Rowing Brings Economic Boon To Area.**

SARASOTA/MANATEE, FL – May 5, 2010 – This weekend the 2010 Southeast Regional Youth Rowing Championship takes place in the 600-acre Nathan Benderson Park located at I-75 and University Parkway on the Sarasota-Manatee County line. The two-day event is expected to draw over 12,000 attendees to our area, many of whom will be first time visitors.

In addition to over 1,500 athletes from 5 states, when the athletes' support groups are multiplied—parents, friends, coaches, and spectators - you begin to see this event's impact. The economic benefits alone for our area through three rowing events held here this Spring are estimated to be as high as \$2.5 million dollars and include more than 30,000 total attendees.

Local rowing stakeholders – the local Regatta Organizing Committee, Sarasota Board of County Commissioners, Sarasota Convention & Visitor's Bureau and neighborhood groups – report that this area's burgeoning rowing scene is a classic "win-win-win" – that is, everyone comes out ahead. The athletes win by competing at a top-notch world class rowing venue, complete with nature preserve, freshwater lake and easy access to hotels, shopping, beaches and restaurants. The local community wins through the large positive economic impact and exposure to attendees who otherwise might not visit. Lastly, our local residents win with quality of life improvements that are happening due to the sport's ever-increasing presence.

The vision for the future in the rowing community here is bright. The site is being master-planned to ensure environmental and neighborhood compatibilities. Currently underway are plans for capital improvements to the course, for the creation of a non-profit Foundation to steer development, and presentation of a Master Park Plan to the County in July.

Later this year, a groundbreaking will mark the start of construction of a 2,000-meter rowing racecourse. Designed to meet strict NCAA and FISA international standards, the course is slated to be ready for the 2011 racing season with hope of securing the NCAA rowing championships in May 2012. Even higher sights are set for World Cup and World championship bids in 2015.

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One future addition to the site will be a Boat House to be used for community outreach activities. Guy Peterson Architects worked with graduate students in a design competition for the boat house and event center; the models can be viewed during this weekend's Regatta.

Community rowing will be the backbone of this sport. It will be inclusive, not exclusive, benefiting the entire community; the local leadership team is committed to forming partnerships with schools and non-profit organizations. The sport provides health and fitness opportunities for all residents, including disadvantaged youth and those that are physically and mentally challenged. "We are all equal on the water," says Bruce Smith, Executive Director of Community Rowing, Inc., a Boston-based rowing club that is the largest in the world.

The reach of rowing extends much further than Sarasota and Manatee counties. Smith is just back from Iraq, yet plans to be in town this weekend for the Championship event. Amidst the ongoing bombings and violence in Iraq, Smith, along with another American, coached a group of rowers for four days last week on a lake in Kurdistan. Smith is here so soon after returning to the U.S. because he has formed a unique alliance with the local group and feels strongly about showing his support.

Smith's role as a key advisor to the rowing organization lends tremendous clout, adding his knowledge and expertise. With his and other's help, the local rowing leadership has become a compelling force in a short time – guiding unparalleled growth and garnering community interest and recognition for a sport that was mostly unknown here just several years ago.

Smith also stated, "I am very excited to work with Sarasota County to design and deliver a new World-Class Rowing Venue, which will have not only a lasting economic and social impact, but also will create the best rowing venue in the western hemisphere, and perhaps the entire world!"

*Two Rowing Photos Attached*

***For more information on rowing please visit [rowingsarasota.com](http://rowingsarasota.com). For media inquiries and interviews on the Championship event, please contact Tricia Lewis at 941-351-0024 or email [tlewis@grapeinc.com](mailto:tlewis@grapeinc.com). Grapevine Communications is a full-service, award-winning Advertising, Marketing and Public Relations firm based in Sarasota and serving clients nationwide.***