

## TORONTO STAR FRESH AIR FUND

GOAL: \$425,000

# Kids pull together at rowing day camp

BY HEATHER GREENWOOD  
STAFF REPORTER

Like a military general, Tommy is yelling instructions to the seven boys and girls lined up in front of him in a rowing shell on the waters outside the Bayside Rowing Club.

"Starboard side paddle, port hold," he bellows. "Number two seat sit up taller."

He is less than 5 feet tall, smaller than any of the other kids in the shell and he's in charge. As coxswain, he's responsible for making sure the vessel doesn't tip over.

The smallest kids get the biggest jobs here.

It's just one of the ironies that club founder Dominic Kahn says makes rowing the ideal sport for these inner city kids.

For three years, Kahn has dedicated the club's summer



BORIS SPREMO / TORONTO STAR

**SEAWORTHY:** Kids skim across the water near the Leslie St. Spit, part of the Bayside Rowing Club's inner-city school program.

day camp to making sure that kids from all walks of life get a chance to participate in the team sport.

This spring he widened the program. Tommy and his classmates are part of the first inner-city school rowing program in Canada.

A former Canadian champion rower, Kahn recently alerted area teachers and principals about the camp and urged them to recommend kids who might

benefit from the program.

\* Kids with trouble focusing, short attention spans and bullying tendencies are prime candidates for the team sport, but anyone — whether pro or novice — can sign up for camp.

Two years ago, Kahn and his staff taught deaf children how to row. This summer, blind kids will get their chance, along with a mix of kids with physical and mental disabilities, from downtown housing projects and from

disadvantaged families.

Money received from reader donations to The Star's Fresh Air Fund will mean that 25 kids at every two-week camp at the club this summer will go for free.

"This is what we're all about," says Kahn gesturing to the kids on the water.

"It's wonderful when they realize, 'Hey I'm important. The team can't function without me and I can't function without the

team,'" Kahn says as he yells tips to Tommy's crew in the shipping channel near the Leslie St. Spit.

"I was kind of nervous," says Adelio, the smallest kid on the water and another coxswain for the group. "I thought it was going to be hard but it was fun."

"We have some future Olympians in our group and some who may not be Olympians," Kahn says with a smile, "but they are all just having a ball.

The lessons they learn here they'll take with them for the rest of their life."

You can help send a kid to one of 91 camps by donating to the Fresh Air Fund. Please send your donation to: The Star Fresh Air Fund, One Yonge St., Toronto, Ont., M5E 1E6.

Gifts are tax-deductible. The Star pays all administration and promotional costs, so every cent donated goes directly to the camps.