

Published November 6th, 2013

## Riding the Wind

By Amanda Kuehn



Daniela Moroz racing at Crissy Field. Photos Linda Moroz

Daniela Moroz appears to be a typical Stanley Middle School student - she hangs out with her friends and goes to school. When classes are over, though, Daniela trains hard as a competitive swimmer with Orinda Aquatics, and on the weekends she zips up her wetsuit, packs up her gear and heads to the delta to catch the wind and ride the waves.

At 12 years old, Daniela was the youngest of the juniors to attend a kitesurfing racing clinic held by the St. Francis Yacht Club (SFYC) this past summer. She learned from some of the best, including female and male world champions, Ericka and Johnny Heineken. "Accidents happen," Daniela admitted, "but I know what I would need to do to stay safe."

Kitesurfing, also called kiteboarding, is a surface water sport in which kites harness the power of the wind in a large kite, using it to propel themselves across the water on a kiteboard, similar to a small surfboard. It takes physical strength and pain-staking technique, aptitudes that Daniela has honed as a swimmer. Riding the water is a passion she learned from her parents, Linda and Vladimir Moroz, windsurfers who first paddled their daughter out on the water as a toddler.

The family has lived in Lafayette for the past eight years. Prior to that, Linda and Vladimir lived in Berkeley, not far from the marina where they met. "I came to California and saw all of these people out on the water in Berkeley Marina," said Linda Moroz, who has always been an active person. "I thought 'Oh, I want to do that.'" She and Vladimir independently came to the United States as refugees from Czechoslovakia in the early '80s, prior to the Velvet Revolution and the fall of communism.

The couple bonded through their mutual love of windsurfing and the life that it entails. "You don't really make other plans," she said. "You go where the wind is."

"It's a sort of a lifestyle," added Vladimir Moroz. "There are surfing bums and beach bums and there are windsurfing bums." It is rare that there is a time of year when you cannot find wind.

On a typical Saturday the family spends the morning at home, packs up their gear and heads for the beach. They travel to Baja for two weeks each winter, where they see many of the same windsurfers they've met before. They've also been to Maui and the Caribbean.

"It's a kind of meditation," Linda Moroz reflected, describing the way she feels when she is alone on the water. Daniela echoed this sentiment, "I love the fact that there is never a dull moment. There is always something new to learn or master."

Daniela participates in a regular racing series on the bay at Crissy Field and hopes to become a part of SFYC's Junior Kite Racing Team, the first of its kind in the USA. "I think it would be really cool to compete in kiting in the 2020 Olympics," she said. For now, she hopes to keep learning and to inspire others her age to do the same.



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