

Scouts head to sea, exploring the Charleston Harbor and inland waterways

By Sully Witte—Moultrie News

The Boy Scouts of America have long held the tradition of making boys into responsible, honest, decision-making, hard-working men.

But a program unique to what the average citizen knows about Boys Scouts of America, is called Sea Scouts.

It's hosted right in Mount Pleasant on the Charleston Harbor and designed for teenagers ages 14-20.

The theme of the program is maritime careers.

The Sea Scouts meet aboard the USS Yorktown at 7 p.m. on the second and fourth Tuesday of every month. Meetings and activities are designed around inspiring a desire to be a Super achiever as well as helping these young participants develop leadership, responsibility and decision making skills.

Sea Scouts had been around since 1908 when Robert Baden-Powell, while sitting around a camp fire with fellow Boy Scouts, expressed an interest in teaching older Scouts about boat management and seamanship. He stressed the need for young men to prepare themselves for service on their country's ships. Sea Scouts, were not officially formed until 1912.

Today it is part of the Venture Programs of the Boy Scouts of America.

The Sea Scouts at Patriots Point are a co-ed group of just a few, joined by an accompanying parent.

Thom Harrison volunteers as Skipper of the Patriots Point Sea Scouts. His son's great grandfather was a Sea Scout as were some of the group's board members.

But what Harrison has found is that many in the area don't even know there is a Sea Scout program here.

"Almost everyone that finds out knows about the program or they themselves participated in it, but few know we're here," he said.

He described it as one of the best little secrets in town.

"Had I known about this, I would have done it when I was a kid."

Harrison explained that the number of Boy Scouts declines through attrition after a certain age because they are on to other things like sports or girls.



The Sea Scouts participate in a Sailoree (At Camp Moultrie). The Sea Scouts meet aboard the USS Yorktown at 7 p.m. on the second and fourth Tuesday of every month.

But a program like Sea Scouts may appeal to those boys and girls who are looking for something that challenges them a little differently.

This is the Patriots Point Sea Scouts third charter. They boast six registered scouts as well as their own boat donated by local yachtsman Richard Gotz.

"It is a beautiful 26' Pearson and is docked at the Charleston Harbor Marina, which donated a slip to the group," Harrison said.

Other boats they use include 420's by Vanguard which are available at Camp Moultrie and Camp Ho Non Wah

courtesy of the Boy Scouts of America, and varying sizes of catamarans by to Aqua Finn. The Aqua Finns are made by American Sail, right here in North Charleston. The group does more than just sail - they canoe, kayak, camp, windsurf, and fish.

"Sailing entails a bunch of different life lessons," Harrison said.

"Terrific things come just from learning how to sail, from running up a sail to charting a course. In addition, they learn most quickly in sailing that you get instant gratification and must have the skills to facilitate instant correction when needed."

The Patriots Point Sea Scouts are focused on teaching these young scouts about maritime vocations. "There's a tremendous amount of adventure to be had in the maritime industry and get paid for it," Harrison said.

The scouts learn about maritime agencies, employment and growth opportunities as well as federal and state maritime agencies including the Ports Authority, the Coast Guard, NOAA, and even coastal park management.

"We do a lot of cool stuff. I am a grown up and I still think it's cool," joked Harrison.

"Generally parents are involved because we encourage active participation. Dads need to

be doing that kind of stuff with their daughters and sons at the age of 14."

There are currently no female scouts enrolled in the program, and what keeps them away according to Harrison, is because it is a part of Boy Scouts of America.

The Patriots Point Sea Scouts meet the second and fourth Tuesday' of each month and plan sail outs or sailorees where they sail out as a group all day and then come back and do scout stuff.

Scouts do not have to have previous sailing experience. The scouts train each other, especially the new ones.

"Generally as they gain more responsibility they ultimately run the ship," Harrison said.

However, Sea Scouts do need to like the water.

They go through extensive training and once they do, they handle everything from preparing, to rigging, departing, docking and breaking it down by themselves.

Harrison takes great joy as the skipper of the group.

"The joy I have gotten is seeing the scouts mature through their advancement and see them become gentlemen and polite young ladies. To see them through the ranks and take on responsibility that is greater than the last is what I enjoy, aside from having the experience on the sailboats," he said.



Scouts ride off in the Zodiac during a 6-day off shore sailing trip.

The Sea Scout program teaches leadership, seamanship, offers river exploration, oceanography, maritime history, career planning, citizenship, character development, positive self-esteem, and responsibility .

If you like adventure, a career in the maritime world is for you. For more information, visit the web site at:

www.seascout510.org

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The Sea Scouts participate in Bull Island Beach Sweep-Community Service project.