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NYS Parks, U.S. Coast Guard, And The NTSB Kick Off Safe Boating Week



Two new marine patrol crafts will christened for the towns of Southold and Shelter Island. (Eileen Casey)

Greenport - The New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, the U.S. Coast Guard and the National Transportation Safety Board will kick off the start of Safe Boating Week, May 22 through May 28, at 11 a.m. on Saturday at Mitchell Marine Park in Greenport. As part of this year's program, State Parks will launch a new "Wear It New York!" life jacket campaign, christen two new patrol craft and celebrate 50 years of volunteer teaching service.

Life Jacket Campaign

State Parks has partnered with the National Safe Boating Council to launch the "Wear It New York!" campaign. The public education campaign asks boaters to sign and pledge to wear their life jackets.

As part of this campaign, more than 100 free jackets will be distributed to pledge signers whose names will be drawn at random. The campaign is funded by the National Safe Boating Council.

"This program is intended to bring greater awareness to the importance of life jackets and to increase familiarity with the newer, cooler and lighter inflatable life jackets and belt packs now available," State Parks Commissioner Carol Ash said. "Thanks to the National Safe Boating Council for sponsoring this campaign."

Patrol Craft To Be Launched

Boating officials will christen two new marine patrol craft for the towns of Southold and Shelter Island. The new 26-foot Boston Whaler Justices were provided by the NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation and made possible through the federal recreational boating safety grant administered by the U.S. Coast Guard.

Southold Town Police Chief Carlisle Cochran said, "I would like to thank the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation for their continued support of boating safety on the East End."

Shelter Island Town Police Chief James Read said, "Our agency is honored that New York State has made available to us an exceptional vessel. This platform will enable us to better protect the citizens of Shelter Island and those who navigate in the Peconic Bay area."

State Parks Recognizes 50 Years Of Volunteer Teaching Service

As one of the cornerstones of safety is education, State Parks will also recognize Len Llewellyn of Mattituck for his 50 years of voluntary service to the state of New York in providing quality boater education to hundreds of Long Island boaters. Many of Len's students today are children of those he first taught in his earliest years within the program.



Safe Boating Week launches on May 22.

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Commissioner Ash added, "It's because of volunteers and friends like Mr. Llewellyn that Parks is able to provide the many services it does to the citizenry of this great state of ours."

The NYS Boater Education Program is taken by nearly 20,000 boaters annually and is provided today by a network of both volunteer and proprietary instructors with the common goal of making recreational boater safer for all.

Long Island Man Recognized For Rescue

A National Association of State Boating Law Administrators Award of Commendation is going to a New York man, Scott Stokkers of Huntington, for his bravery and selflessness in saving three young lives on Long Island Sound last summer. On the evening of August 14, 2009, Stokkers responded to cries for help from three young boaters whose 10-foot boat took on water and sank in the dark waters of Makamah Beach. Without life jackets, the three young boaters were unable to swim the nearly half mile to shore due to exhaustion. Stokkers carefully approached the panicked boaters, getting them aboard his canoe and safely ashore.

Some items to keep on your boat for greater safety. (boatinginsurance.net)

State Parks, which is responsible for providing the public with a safe, enjoyable environment for recreational boating in New York, nominated Stokkers for NASBLA's Award of Commendation. The national non-profit organization, which works to develop public policy for recreational boating safety, annually presents its award "to recognize persons who have exhibited heroism and faced risks to their own lives in saving another person or people involved in a recreational boating safety incident."

"The great thing about this rescue is that it was a tragedy averted," said Al Johnson, recreational boating specialist for the First Coast Guard District. "Over 80 percent of recreational boating and paddling fatalities in the Northeast are the result of capsizing or falling overboard and, of these, close to 90 percent were not wearing a life jacket."

The New York State Parks Marine Service Unit is responsible for the general coordination of boating safety programs and supports marine law enforcement efforts across the state, including patrols, training and funding for local marine enforcement activities.

For more information about boating safety - including listings of boating safety courses - and marine recreation in New York State, go to www.nysparks.com or call 518-474-0445.

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