OUTDOORS

Boat show cruises into town

Annual Upstate event in 43rd year

By Scott Keepfer
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Balmy weather may still be a few months away, but thoughts of being "on the water" already are filling some people's heads.

For them, next week's 43rd Annual Upstate South Carolina Boat Show should help quench their offseason thirst and perhaps steer them toward a new purchase.

At least that's what Jesse Maahs is counting on.

"This show is a huge huge deal for us," said Maahs, business manager for Performance PowerSports of Seneca. "It's basically a jump-start to the watercraft season. We get a lot of buyers."

Performance PowerSports is one of more than 40 dealers who will be on hand at Greenville's TD Convention Center to display the latest in fishing boats, pontoons, cruisers, ski boats and personal watercraft as well as boating accessories.

The show begins a four-day run Thursday.

Performance PowerSports, which is the No. 1 watercraft dealer in South Carolina and has been the top seller in the region for the last two years, primarily caters to buyers who frequent lakes Keowee, Hartwell and Jocassee. But the dealer also sells motorcycles, ATVs, utility vehicles and scooters.

Maahs said that a stressed economy has taken a toll on some segments of the industry, but "things are picking back up" across the board.

"If you don't do good business – if you're not thinking about the customer 100 percent and developing the latest and greatest packages – then you're probably going out of business in tough economic times," he said. "These times won't allow you to not care about your customers."

Maahs said Performance PowerSports will have a 6,000-square foot display at the show that will include 20 watercraft. As an added incentive to buy, many manufacturers offer special deals, such as extended warranties, that are only available during the show, Maahs said.

IF YOU GO

What: 43rd Annual Upstate S.C. Boat Show
Where: TD Convention Center, Greenville
When: Thursday-Sunday
Hours: Thurs., noon-9 p.m.; Fri., noon-9 p.m.; Sat., 10 a.m.-9 p.m.; Sun., noon-6 p.m.
Admission: Adults $7, seniors (65+) $6, students (6-18) $6, under 6 free
Parking: $5
More information: (864) 233-2562 or www.upstatescboatshow.com