Rules of the water

BY STEPHANIE JADRNICEK
THE JOURNAL

SENECA — Most everyone knows the rules of the road, but what about the rules of the water?

Golden Corner Lakes Sail and Power Squadron is a nonprofit boating organization dedicated to making boating safer and more enjoyable by teaching classes in safety, seamanship, piloting, sailing, weather, engine maintenance, the global positioning system and celestial navigation.

The squadron is offering an upcoming five-week course running on Thursdays, March 31 through April 28. Classes will take place in the Oconee Room of Oconee Memorial Hospital from 6:30-8:30 p.m. and will require a $30 fee for a manual and supplies.

Golden Corner Lakes Sail and Power Squadron (GCL) is one of 450 squadrons that make up the United States Power Squadrons — the world's largest private nonprofit organization.

"We recently celebrated our 100th year anniversary. It started in a yachting club in 1914," GCL commander Ron Osburn said. "They didn't have any rules or regulations for private boats because there was only commercial craft back then, but somebody started building private wooden boats. So the power squadron came into being to establish rules and regulations and provide guidelines for private boats."

GCL offers more than safety courses, though. Members of this fraternal boating club have meetings that incorporate fun cruises and land activities. On March 12, GCL will host a Geo Hunt. Executive officer Brian Hackley said everyone enjoyed the Jungle Cruise on Lake Hartwell last year.

"Members took their jet skis and boats up to a spot on Lake Hartwell where a creek flows into the lake," Hackley said. "We went up the creek, and it looked like we were going through a jungle — very narrow with overhanging trees. At the end was a beautiful waterfall. After taking the cruise, we came back and had a cookout at one of our members' houses."

As part of a community service, the boating squad-

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THE DETAILS

WHAT: America's Boating Course
WHEN: Thursdays, March 31 - April 28; 6:30-8:30 p.m.
WHO: Golden Corner Lakes Sail and Power Squadron
COST: $30 for manual and supplies
PRE-REGISTRATION REQUIRED at least two weeks in advance.
FORE MORE information, call (864) 985-0788 or email mjstroven@bellsouth.net



SPECIAL TO THE JOURNAL

Golden Corner Lakes Sail and Power Squadron teaches classes in safety, seamanship, piloting, sailing, weather, engine maintenance, global positioning system's and celestial navigation.

BOATS: aiming to be a safer for everyone

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ron also oversees a section of buoys located on Lake Hartwell, Lake Keowee and Lake Russell. Members assist the Department of Natural Resources and the Army Corp of Engineers by keeping track of the condition of the buoys.

"If there's a problem with the buoy — maybe it's missing or maybe it's been damaged in some way — we note that in these inspections," Hackley said.

They also offer boat safety checks for the public. During these brief 20-minute inspections, members of GCL review key points in the Coast Guard requirements for South Carolina and Georgia so the owners understand what they need to do if there are any shortcomings.

The boaters then receive a decal to display on their boat, which communicates to any authority that the boat has already met certain standards within a given time.

On April 16 and 17, GCL will host an In-Water Boat Show at the Hartwell Marina. Sticking to their mission of education, members will set up a booth with a virtual safety trainer.

"It's basically a computer with three screens that simulates being out on a boat," Hackley said. "There are other vessels on the water, such as sailboats, and you can practice docking and leaving the dock as well."

With more than 30 specialized courses, GCL offers a class for everyone.

On April 30 at Hartwell Marina, the squadron will teach a class called Partner in Command. The class targets not the captain of the boat, but the passengers.

"Let's say a guy and a gal are out on the boat and one of them has a heart attack or becomes incapacitated — can the other person on that boat bring the boat back in?" Osburn said. "Do they know how to start it, how to put it into gear and how to get it safely back to a dock?"

Osburn told a story about a grandmother and grandfather who had taken their granddaughter out on their pontoon to go tubing. When the granddaughter finished tubing, she swam back to the boat to climb aboard.

"We teach people when somebody's around the boat you turn the motor off," he said. "But the motor was still running and the prop was turning, and it split her leg from her ankle to her hip."

When the granddaughter managed to get onto the boat, the grandfather took one look at his granddaughter's leg and fainted. Fortunately, the grandmother knew how to start and drive the boat, so she got everyone to safety.

"We compare our boating course to driving a car," Osburn said. "You wouldn't give the keys to your car to a young person, an old person or anyone for that matter who didn't know how to drive. But today in South Carolina, you can go buy a 40-foot yacht and they'll say here's the keys and off you go, even if you've never been on a boat."

Fore more information, call (864) 888-4366 or visit gclsaps.com.

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Members of the Golden Corner Lakes Sail and Power Squadron enjoy activities together such as cruises to hidden waterfalls on the lakes.