Safe boats help save lives

BY STEPHANIE JADRNICEK
THE JOURNAL

SENECA — The weather's getting warmer, and with a little dose of spring fever, local residents are prepping their boats for the upcoming season.

The Golden Corner Lakes Sail and Power Squadron provides a free vessel safety check for boaters on lakes Keowee, Hartwell and Jocassee. Examiners can meet boaters at their private docks or at a community dock for a group safety check.

Squadron public relations officer Sue Dragoo said the purpose of the vessel safety check program is two-fold: to ensure the craft is safe from bow to stern and to add to the enjoyment of boating.

"A vessel safety check may help prevent citations by ensuring your vessel meets federal, state and local safety requirements as well as identify possible equipment defects and costly breakdowns," she said. "It also increases safe boating practices to help you avoid accidents and injuries and provides a better understanding, use and care of your marine safety equipment."

Examiners inspect items such as fire extinguishers, backfire flame control, sound producing devices, visual distress signals, life jackets and navigation lights.

"The program heightens the boater's awareness of safety issues through one-on-one contact with volunteer vessel examiners," Dragoo said.

In addition to the safety checks, the squadron is offering two America's Boating Courses. Each course consists of five consecutive Thursday classes. The first course begins March 2, and the second starts April 20. Both will be taught in the Oconee Room on the lower level of the outpatient wing at Oconee Memorial Hospital in Seneca from 6:30-8:30 p.m.

"The course is designed to advance public knowledge and skills for safer boating in the Upstate and covers safety equipment, anchoring, trailering, navigation rules and aids as well as state and local regulations, how to handle emergencies and personal watercraft operation," Dragoo said.

The course is free, but the workbook, which can be shared with family members, costs $30. Fees are due during the first class.

Register for the course by contacting Ron Osburn at (864) 972-2434 or email ozburn@bellsouth.net. For more information about vessel safety checks or to schedule an inspection, contact Ed Lashley at (864) 654-4797 or at lashleye@nctv.com.

stephanie@upstatetoday.com | (864) 973-6686



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