

UPDATE: NOW CANCELLED: Darien Groups Organize Boat/Camp Day

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Update, 7:25 p.m., Thursday:

Boat/Camp for this year has been cancelled due to expected bad weather.

Original article, Wednesday:

Boat/Camp/2016 will be sponsored by the Darien Sail & Power Squadron, with significant help from volunteers from the Darien Boat Club, Noroton Yacht Club, and Person-To-Person.

This event introduces local under-privileged children to the beauty of Long Island Sound, utilizing the resources and good will of the Squadron and our boating friends.

— an announcement from the organizers of Boat/Camp/2016

Now in its twentieth year, Boat/Camp/2016 will see over 100 campers and counselors involved, a fleet of more than 20 boats, and the participation of many, many volunteers from the boating community and the Squadron.

Volunteers participate in any of several ways (and more are always needed!):

- as boat “captains” – volunteers from the local boating community provide powerboats over 18 feet with at least a six-person capacity
- as on-board boat “crew” – we staff at least one adult on board in addition to the captain
- as on-shore logistical support — our volunteers distribute supplies, make the kids feel comfortable when “jacketing-up” on shore, and as “escorts” in the first adventure of the day — getting the Campers down to the docks and on-board the fleet of boats that are awaiting them.

Will it be fun? You bet. And for the kids? It will be a day to remember – actually being off-shore, “on their own boat.”

Here is what happens on Boat/Camp day: At about 10 a.m. 100 campers and counselors arrive at the Noroton Yacht Club in their Big Yellow Bus, and are apportioned out, in small groups, each with a camp counselor, to one of the 20 power boats waiting at the docks

Each captain and crew are supplied with a brown-bag picnic lunch by the Squadron. Campers and counselors bring their own lunches with them. Boat/Camp provides snacks and drinks for all.

Boats depart the Noroton YC docks for a tour of islands, lighthouses, coves, harbors, and general fun on the water. Boat captains chose their own points of interest, speed, and routes. Some go in circles a lot, others visit Rowayton and the islands. Market research has shown that the activity most enjoyed by the campers is waving to their friends on other boats!

Boats return to the dock at 1:45 p.m. for ice cream on the beach, a final head-count and loading on the Big Yellow Bus, a final cheer, and off to home.

The young people, Grades 3 to 6, attend local camps supported by Person-to-Person's “camperships.”

Since, in addition to the captain, each boat is staffed by at least one Squadron Crew, and a camp counselor, the adult-to-camper ratio is really high — and so are the rewards presented by these few hours of quality time

with the kids.

Campers are eager to learn about how boats work, the new names of things, the open waters, the salt spray, and just about everything. They are a great group of kids who typically have had little or no time near the Sound or on Stamford beaches.

Several key community organizations help the Squadron make the event a success: Person-to-Person, Noroton Yacht Club, and the marine units of the Noroton Fire Department and the Darien Police.

Yes, the Darien Police boat is "just another volunteer boat" at Boat/Camp - with campers and counselors on board. However, this Boat/Camp craft has lights and siren — which seem to be used in non-emergency situations on this day — for no specific reason — although it must have something to do with the fact that kids are on board.

The Noroton Fire Department Marine Unit supplies impressive jets of water that boats can pass beneath — without getting wet!