

Paddlesports Business

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From the Publisher of Canoe & Kayak Magazine

PUBLISHED 6 TIMES A YEAR

MARCH/APRIL 2002

\$7.95

Finding the Future With Youth on the Water

By Robin Stanton

In Oakland, California, 34 students from a public high school are taking paddling as a PE class. In Franklin, Washington, 400 kids learn basic and intermediate sea kayaking skills every summer. In Channahon, Illinois, a Whitewater Kayak Club offered by the city parks department got 400 children and youths on the water last summer. The Nantahala Racing Club is teaching kids the techniques of slalom racing across the southeast. In Lake Lanier in Georgia, 147 middle-school-age children had a chance to compete in sprint racing.

All across the country, there's a lot of fun for paddlers as they get out on the water to get young people on the water. Research on participation in outdoor activities shows a small but significant increase in kayaking among the 10- to 24-year-old crowd, a group that's crucial

for the long-term survival of the paddlesports industry.

Proven youth paddling is good for the industry and good for the kids, so there's a lot of interest in youth paddling programs.

Keith Miller, the owner of California Canoe & Kayak, is sponsoring the PE class for the Oakland School District. "There are a lot of kids who do not excel in traditional team sports," he said. "As an avid paddler myself, and having this business, I wanted to figure out a way to get a district-wide program going to bring all kinds of nontraditional sports into the schools—such as climbing, mountain



The California Whitewater Wave Box crew is getting a head start in Oakland's Jack London Square during California Canoe & Kayak's Freeski Freeway in February.

climbing, something that would really get kids excited on."

The first class started two weeks ago, and Miller is excited.

"I love the city of [continued on page 10]

Retail Tactics Differ in Soft Economy

By Bob Hindstrand

As the economy softens and consumers become more watchful in their spending habits, sales of leisure products have slowed. In response to the slowdown, most paddlesports retailers are taking measures to ride out the fall. Their plans tend to fall into two distinct camps: those who are tightening their belts, and those who are going on the attack.

An example of the former group is Steve Cavallaro of North Cove Outfitters in Old Saybrook, Connecticut.

"I'm doing what any good businessman would do," Cavallaro said. "I've made smaller, more frequent orders, taken advantage of as many anticipation deals as possible, and ordered lower models from vendors. I'd do the same thing if I were selling cars and houses."

"Before this year," he continued, "I felt that everyone, retailers as well as suppliers, was simply assuming as if nothing was ever going to go wrong. Now we all have to be smart. We have to watch inventory more carefully."

The flip opposite coast, Judy Meyer of Pacific Water Sports in Seattle reports that she is "looking [continued on page 10]

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