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Free Kayaking Returns to Constitution Beach

Last summer's widely successful free kayaking program at Constitution Beach that drew over 1,500 residents has returned for the next 30 days. The free kayaking program kicked off Monday at the beach and is being run by East Boston's Neighborhood of Affordable Housing's (NOAH) Community Building and Environment Department's Youth Crew.

According to NOAH's Director of Community Building and Environment Department, Chris Marchi, the youths are shooting for 4,000 boaters over next 30 days. The program is funded by a Save the Harbor/Save the Bay Better Beaches Grant and Save the Harbor is looking to use NOAH's model to offer thousands of residents great salt water adventures at other area beaches.

Marchi said with 15 miles of coastline, Eastie has one of the best hidden waterfronts in all of Boston and should be a great resource for summer fun.

"We have the Nation's cleanest Harbor, but we, as a city, need to learn how to use it," said Marchi. "Ask the average Bostonian how often they've gone on a canoe, kayak or row boat? Even here in East Boston, which is essentially an island, the majority of people have never been boating. Our model recognizes that knowledge, time and money are often obstacles to participation, even in fun programs like boating."

Marchi said NOAH's goal this summer is to create as much opportunity as it can for residents to have positive experiences out on the water.

"And we know that when people see how powerful and beautiful our waterfront is, they will come back for more," he said.

Last year, NOAH's Youth crew started a new approach to waterfront access by organizing 14 days of free kayaking

on Constitution Beach in collaboration with Save the Harbor/Save the Bay. NOAH got over 1,600 residents out on the water.

"Kayaking is so easy to do that just about anybody can handle it," said Youth Crew Member Michael Passariello. "And we use very stable and comfortable sit-on-top ocean kayaks, so people don't feel confined by the boats. It literally takes no time for novice kayakers to get the hang of it on these boats."

The Constitution Beach Kayaking Center is open every day through August 9 from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.. The last boat leaves around 4 p.m. and rides are generally limited to a half hour.

All boaters need to sign a waiver. Boaters 14 to 18-years-old are allowed to paddle independently, with a waiver signed by a parent, legal guardian or responsible adult. Children ages 10 to 14 may kayak alone if accompanied on the water by a supervising adult. Children under age 10 may paddle if accompanied on a boat by a parent, legal guardian or responsible adult.

"When people think of a resource as dilapidated and unsafe, they tend to 'Photoshop' it out of their consciousness" said Marchi. "If they think that it's not safe and they can't use it, so they just mentally erase it". Marchi says that if people cash out on the salt water, they're making a big mistake. Boston Harbor water is a clean and healthy resource. If we don't take advantage of it, boy, we're really missing out. With elevated levels of asthma, and chronic health diseases so high in the city and in particular, in East Boston, we need to find every opportunity to get outdoors and get active."

The kayaking also accommodates large groups and is welcome. For group reservations of more than 15 people, please contact Kelly Rusch at krusch@noahcdc.org.