

ACA Volunteers & Partners Deliver 33 Simultaneous Kayaking 101 classes across 5 states to kick off National Safe Boating Week and get Messages about Safe Boating to “Casual Paddlers”

ACA Regional Activity Council leaders and Kayaking 101 use partnerships to amplify the impact of volunteer contributions for 10X community impact among the paddlers “most at risk”

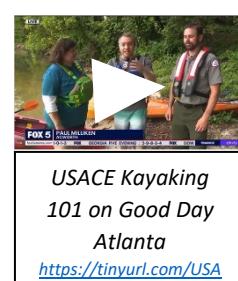
For the fourth year in a row, ACA Regional Activity Council’s grassroots leaders brought together community paddling leaders to teach Kayaking 101 classes to beginner paddlers to kick off National Safe Boating Week. In 2024, this initiative was awarded the [Community Impact award from the National Safe Boating Council](#) as a successful, volunteer-led initiative with significant impact on the paddlers who, according to the US Coast Guard, are [statistically most at risk of incidents and fatalities](#).

This annual initiative began in 2022 when the ACA Tennessee State Director and the Tennessee State Parks Program Manager wanted to find a way combat paddlesports fatalities. They started with 12 locations. In 2025 our paddlesports communities rallied to provide simultaneous Kayaking 101 classes in 33 locations across 5 states in collaboration with the US Coast Guard Auxiliary, 7 state agencies, the US Army Corps of Engineers and 55 community partners including paddling clubs, outfitters, schools, and other stakeholders. In total, 190 volunteers taught 330 students in one day across 5 states: North Carolina, Tennessee, South Carolina, Georgia, and Virginia. The collective effort also generated significant media including 3 network tv interviews in major media markets, a mention on NPR and 19 additional news stories.

A Strategic Push for 10X Impact

This initiative began in 2022 under the leadership of the ACA Regional Activity Council (RAC), ACA Regional Chairs and ACA State Directors in partnership with public lands agencies like State Parks, State Wildlife Commissions and the US Army Corps of Engineers. Kayaking 101 is further fueled by the contributions of individual ACA instructors, individual community volunteers, paddling clubs, outfitters, local US Coast Guard Auxiliary flotillas, and other stakeholders in the paddlesports community. The fundamental premise of the event is that when each person brings their contribution to bear, they have a 1X impact from the effort they expend, but when we all bring our parts together, strategically so that we leverage contributions from volunteers, agencies and community partners until they compound and amplify each other, then we are able to have a 10X impact from the same amount of effort.

Additionally, in paddlesports our community often celebrates elite achievements, elite status and praising the people at the top of the paddlesports power structures. The Kayaking 101 Partnership is an annual event that recognizes and celebrates leadership at all levels across the community to deliver a community-based and



teamwork-driven training event to cut through the noise of the general media marketplace and change the trajectory of beginners in our sport. We are celebrating leaders of all kinds and from all corners of our communities who come together once a year to reach more beginner paddlers than any of us could teach on our own in a day.

"This event leverages National Safe Boating Week to really let grassroots paddlesports community leaders shine as we use the multiplier effect of our collective efforts to reach beginner paddlers across the region," says Andrea White, Kayaking 101

Partnership co-founder who serves as ACA Southeast Regional Chair and RAC Executive Committee member. "By working in partnership we apply the principles of mechanical advantage to community-based training and realize results none of us could accomplish alone. In the process, we celebrate the power of volunteers and rekindle the joy that comes from experiencing our sport through the eyes of beginners."

In 2025 the Kayaking 101 Partnership benefitted from collective efforts of 190 volunteers, 7 state agencies, the US Army Corps of Engineers and US Coast Guard Auxiliary and 55 community partners to successfully teach 330 paddlers in one day. Additionally, we secured an interview on the ABC affiliate and a mention on NPR in the Nashville market, an interview on the NBC affiliate in the Atlanta market, and a recurring live shot on the Good Day Atlanta show on the Fox affiliate in the Atlanta market, as well as 19 additional news stories and a significant online presence on social media showing paddlers having fun and learning to be safe.

These media hits in major media markets mean that hundreds of thousands more casual paddlers heard our messages about safe boating and the value of a day of ACA training than we can typically reach in person. And those messages were coupled with links to the free ACA online safety course and links to local community organizations where people can find additional classes and resources.

North Carolina: 13 Events Statewide & Milestones for Youth



ACA North Carolina, partnered with North Carolina State Parks, the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission, the US Coast Guard Auxiliary, 63 individual volunteers from across ACA North Carolina, and 17 local partners to offer Kayaking 101 in 13 locations throughout the state, training a total of 123 students in one day.

Our river class was able to get on the river this year and despite the ominous weather forecast, all locations were able to get quality on-water paddling time which is great. Several locations also offered kayak and stand up paddleboard (SUP) training, while others included canoe instruction. Students appreciated the opportunity to try multiple types of paddlecraft, further enhancing their skills and confidence. In addition to the huge success of the overall event itself, ACA North Carolina raised over \$2,000 that will be donated to Western North Carolina to help with the Hurricane Helene recovery efforts.

One highlight was the first-ever youth Kayaking 101 class, coordinated by Tory Thompson. 15 young paddlers were led by ACA Instructor Trainer Chris Wing and supported by ACA Competition Director Jed Hinkley and U.S. Slalom National Team Members Bug Lokken and Marcella Altman.

The ACA North Carolina Kayaking 101 Partnership leadership team included ACA North Carolina State Director William Holman, NC State Park Ranger and ACA Instructor Trainer Jake Vitak, and Coast Guard Auxiliary Paddlecraft Safety Division Chief Roland McDevitt. In addition to North Carolina State Parks, the NCWRC, and the US Coast Guard Auxiliary, local partners included: Carolina Kayak Club, Carolina Canoe Club, Piedmont Paddlesports, H2O Dreams, Knee Deep Adventures, Frog Hollow Outdoors, Paddle NC,



2025 Kayaking Medias Hits
<https://tinyurl.com/2025-k101-Media-Hits>

Kitty Hawk Kites, Paddling for Pennies, City of Raleigh, Yadkin Riverkeeper, City of High Point, Catawba Riverkeeper, Team River Runner Fayetteville, Elon University, Get Outdoors Pedal and Paddle, and Cape Fear River Adventures.

Georgia: Growing Statewide Impact & Amplifying Safe Boating Messages on Good Day Atlanta



Georgia celebrated its second year of Kayaking 101 Partnership events for National Safe Boating Week with activities at seven locations across the state working in partnership with Georgia Rivers, US Army Corps of Engineers, Georgia Department of Natural Resources, the US Coast Guard Auxiliary, Georgia Power, Trust for Public Land and 13 additional local partners. A team of 21 ACA-certified Instructors and 27 additional volunteers trained 75 new paddlers, offering a mix of flatwater, river, and coastal kayaking instruction.

Proclaiming the 10X power of partnership, the Georgia Coast Guard Auxiliary was able to secure a [Safe Boating Week proclamation from Governor Brian Kemp](#) with a shoutout to ACA Georgia and Kayaking 101 partners. Media outreach about the proclamation from our paddling club partner Georgia Rivers resulted in [a Kayaking 101 interview on the NBC affiliate, 11Alive in Atlanta](#) on the morning show where we celebrated the instructor contributions and training opportunities statewide. Additional media efforts secured a three-hour recurring live spot on the Good Day Atlanta show on the Atlanta Fox affiliate for Wear Your Life Jacket to Work Day including an [on water Kayaking 101 interview](#) as well as [a Kayaking 101 interview with Georgia Rivers and the US Army Corps of Engineers](#) and several additional news stories.

After having a fun day on the water, many of the Kayaking 101 students in Georgia are already signing up for additional classes and paddling trips with partner organizations. This spotlights our communal efforts to help beginners gain positive first experiences on the water that build safety habits and, ultimately, convert casual paddlers to committed paddlers.

The ACA Georgia Kayaking 101 Partnership leadership team included ACA Georgia State Director Paul Winget, ACA Southeastern Chair Andrea White, and Fish Georgia Rivers Program Coordinator Kendon Townsel. This expansive effort was made possible through partnerships with Georgia Rivers, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers - Allatoona Lake, U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary, Georgia Power, Trust for Public Land, Forsyth County Parks and Recreation, Nantahala Outdoor Center, City of Chattahoochee Hills, Chattahoochee RiverLands, Moon River Kayak Tours, Middle GA Kayaking, Kayak Trips and Training, Georgia Canoeing Association, Whitewater Express- Columbus GA, Festive Water Paddlesports, Wildwood Outfitters, Coosa River Basin Initiative, Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Westbrook Supply Co., and the individual volunteers of ACA Georgia.

Tennessee: 10 locations including specialty classes for Kayak Fishing and Adaptive Kayaking



ACA Tennessee, partnered with Tennessee State Parks, the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency, 70 individual volunteers from ACA Tennessee and the paddlesports community, as well as 14 local partners to offer Kayaking 101 in 10 locations throughout the state, training a total of 108 students in one day.

Highlights across the state included a mixture of lake and river classes as well as specialty classes for newcomers focused on Kayak Fishing and Adaptive Paddling. We also were able to secure a mention on NPR in the Nashville media market as well as [an interview on the local ABC affiliate station in Nashville](#) and 11 other news stories statewide to help spread the word.

At David Crockett Birthplace State Park – a perennial and enthusiastic Kayaking 101 partner – the park is still closed due to Hurricane Helene recovery efforts in the region. Unwilling to be left out of the National Safe Boating week activities, park rangers joined leaders from the local paddling club, Appalachian Paddling Enthusiasts, to publish a [safety video on social media](#).

The ACA Tennessee Kayaking 101 Partnership leadership team included ACA Tennessee State Director ANDe Demetriou, ACA Event Coordinator and Chota Canoe Club leader Kim Abney, ACA Southeastern Chair Andrea White, as well as Tennessee State Parks partners Laura Franklin and Leigh Hardcastle. In addition to Tennessee State Parks and TWRA, local partners included: Appalachian Paddling Enthusiasts; Blues City Kayaks; Bluff City Canoe Club; Catalyst Sports; Chattanooga Therapeutic Recreation Services; Chota Canoe Club; East Tennessee Whitewater Club; Nolichucky Outdoor Learning Institute; River Sports Outfitters; Team River Runner-Atlanta; Tennessee RiverLine; Tennessee Scenic Rivers Association; Tennessee Valley Canoe Club; Tennessee Kayak Anglers; and West Tennessee Canoe and Kayak Club, and the local instructors and volunteers of ACA Tennessee.

South Carolina: Tailored Efforts at 2 Locations Spread the Word about Safe Boating



Working in partnership with South Carolina State Parks and the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources, ACA South Carolina led tailored classes at 2 locations thanks to the efforts of 7 volunteers and 5 local partners.

The ACA South Carolina Kayaking 101 Partnership leadership team included ACA South Carolina State Director and RAC Vice Chair Geoffrey Chambers, RAC Secretary Bev Cosslett, South Carolina State Parks partners

Terry Conway and Jim Stanton, South Carolina DNR representative Phillip Robertson, US Coast Guard Auxiliary representative Walter Runck, and US Coast Guard representative and ACA Instructor Trainer Scott Szczepaniak supported by contributions from Low Country Paddlers, Augusta Canoe and Kayak Club, Sun City Indian Land Paddling Club, and Edisto River Canoe and Kayak Commission.

Virginia: Friends of the Rappahannock Trip Leader Training



In Fredericksburg, Virginia, National Safe Boating Week on-water training took the form of an ACA River Kayak Day Trip Leader course for Friends of the Rappahannock's environmental educators. The session combined a classroom portion with 16 participants and an on-water portion with 12 paddlers. Utilizing the new ACA Smart Start for Safe Paddling book as a framework, participants practiced strokes and rescues on flatwater before tackling a class II+ section of the Rappahannock River. Key lessons focused on trip planning, making go/no-go decisions, rescue scenarios, and sound judgment—critical skills for safe group paddling.