



Boating brings families together to relax, exercise and learn skills

When families come to Grand Bay Marine in Traverse City and tell Rick Allen that they're thinking about investing in a boat as a way for the family to have fun and enjoy time together, he can't help but smile.

That's because Allen, who heads up brokerage for new and used yachts for his company, spent every moment he could on the local and regional waters with his two sons when they were growing up.

Many years later, they are now young adults, with a passion for boating, both as a hobby and professionally. Son Jamie is a high school student who works part-time at Boater's World in Traverse City, and his older brother Judd, a graduate of New England Culinary in Vermont, serves as a private chef on a

125 foot yacht based in Florida.

"That influence, that love of boating, has been carried on for them as a way of life," said Allen. "It started out as a way for us to spend time together, and years later, it still is. When you think about it, there are few better ways for a family to relax and recreate together.

"Whether you're just getting away from everything by heading out to the middle of the bay, turning the motor off and listening to music, or you're going out on a day trip and plan to do a little water skiing, swimming or tubing, how many things can a group of people do where everyone can find something special about the experience that they all can enjoy. In most families with a boat, if someone suggests

going out on it, you usually don't hear anyone saying no."

That seems to be the case in the Wolf household. Dad Dan is a busy consultant who owns Dewar Sloan Consulting in Traverse City and frequently travels. During the boating months of the summer when he's back in town and especially on the weekends, he looks forward to taking his wife, Julie, and children Jared and Megan out on the family's 26-foot Sea Ray.

Dan describes himself as a "lifelong boater." He and Julie met while sailing competitively. When children came into the picture, they introduced their new infants to life on the water.

"They took a lot of their naps out on the bay, and we always saw boating as a wonderful lifestyle thing to be able to

enjoy with them," said Dan. "It's very social for us. We go out together, we take friends, they take friends, or both, and everyone has a great time. We absolutely look forward to being out on the water, that world with no boundaries where you can leave stress behind for a while."

Like most others who make boating a family affair, the opportunity to get out on the water is a platform for a variety of other activities, from swimming and water tubing and wake boarding to going on picnics or camping.

Parents also use that time to teach children the skills of boat operation, letting them expand on the basics they've learned in boating safety classes held by organizations like the Department of Natural Resources, American

Red Cross, United States Coast Guard, and others.

In the Wolf family, for example, both Jared and Megan have completed and earned user certification from such classes and are allowed to operate a boat with parental supervision.

Steve Bajtko of Onekema Marine says that in his years in the industry, families who have gotten into boating have stayed in boating.

They typically graduate from smaller boats of 16- to 19-foot length made for use on local inland lakes and those in the 20-foot range that are appropriate for East and West Grand Traverse Bay and Lake Michigan, to bigger cruisers accommodating families on weekend trips.

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