

## **DOWNTOWN BOATHOUSE VOLUNTEER INTRODUCTION**

**Pier 40 (at Houston Street), Pier 96 (at 56th Street), and 72nd Street**

### **What is the Downtown Boathouse?**

First - What it's NOT:

It is not a place to pay to store a boat.

It is not a place to go swimming

The downtown boathouse is not a club or an exclusive paddling group.

What it IS:

The downtown boathouse is a non profit kayaking organization that runs off donations from the public, that wants to make sure that people can use the Hudson River recreationally - for paddle boats (in our case - kayaks). It is for the public to be able to have access to and enjoy the water.

### **Most Important Thing About Volunteering: It's Fun!**

→ I think of volunteering at the boathouse as "you get back what you put into it"

→ You can do as much or as little as you like - there is no time commitment

→ You don't even have to know how to paddle a kayak to start volunteering. If you just want to work at the information desk, organizing, and helping other volunteers, that's great! We don't expect you to get into a boat unless you want to.

→ As a volunteer you can take advantage of the classes offered to the public, and also special classes and sessions that we notify our volunteer group of via e mail and a bulletin board

→ You learn a lot about kayaking and boating from other volunteers - such as: how to paddle efficiently, how to paddle a decked boat, how to do a self rescue, rescue other kayaks, roll a kayak, navigation and river skills, water safety, and more.

→ You can practice your people skills working with the public

→ You will make friends regardless...

→ It's just so much fun.

**As a volunteer your "job" is to make sure that people have fun and stay safe!**

### **General Description of Safety at the Boathouse**

#### **It Starts at the INFORMATION DESK...**

##### **Points to remember at the information desk:**

-People signing waivers must be over 18, and must know how to swim

-For kids under age 18, parent/guardian must sign waiver for them

-For kids under age 16 they must go in a boat with a parent/guardian

-Kids in the 16-18 range can take out a boat by themselves if the parent/guardian IS PRESENT ON THE DOCK or IN ANOTHER BOAT.

-NO PETS IN A PUBLIC BOAT EVER, EVER, EVER, Even if they have their own cute lifejackets from LL Bean, or doggie outfitters. NO PETS. Sorry.

-People sign ONE waiver that is good for the whole summer at any DTBH location.

-People can borrow a lock/locker and use our changing rooms

-If someone wants to use the bathroom...they can use the PUBLIC PORT A POTTIES that are in the park outside. Toilets in the boathouse are for parks staff and volunteers only.

## **THE DOCK...**

- People **MUST** wear a lifejacket properly to come down to the lower dock. If their lifejacket is ill-fitted or not zippered/snapped correctly it must be corrected before they set foot on the lower dock
- If children are getting in a boat with parents - remember this rule: **KIDS ARE NEVER IN A BOAT ALONE!** They should be the last ones into the boat and the first ones out.
- Volunteers help people into and out of boats safely. People must sit on the dock and slide their bottoms into the boat. No one should ever stand up in a boat. To get out of the kayak tell people to slide their bottoms onto the dock or roll onto their bellies on the dock.
- Tell people the rules of the embayment (keep your boat 20 feet away from all side piers, back wall, don't go out past the sheltered area into the main current of the river ,don't stand up in boat, no horseplay/splashing on purpose)
- If you are comfortable giving instruction on how to paddle, please give instruction to people who ask, or people who need help. You can always ask if this is a "first time" for people - and give them quick tips.
- You should have a safety whistle with you or know where you can find one quickly.in order to call kayakers in during a thunderstorm, and to indicate unsafe behavior in any one boat (ie, excessive horseplay, boat going into pier, under dock, etc...)

## **THE EMBAYMENT...**

- Once you have learned how to paddle comfortably, and have practiced rescuing other boaters using a tow line, and rescuing people who fall out of their boats - you can patrol the embayment. The rescues are something that you can practice in one of the appropriate Wednesday classes, and something that you can ask knowledgeable volunteers to teach you, and to help you practice at other times
- In the embayment you can make sure people respect boundaries and give them gentle reminders. Try to be friendly rather than confrontational.
- You can remind people that the safest way to sit in the kayak is upright (people sunbathing and lying down in boats are prone to fall out easily if a wave comes up or find themselves drifting into a pier without knowing)
- You can make conversation with kayakers, and give tips to people who are receptive.
- As long as the kayakers are obeying the rules, safe, able to maneuver the boat, and not in danger of going outside boundaries, getting stuck, or falling in, they are OK.

## **REMEMBER...**

**The best way to be a good volunteer is to introduce yourself as a new volunteer and ask an older volunteer if they can show you how to do things (at desk, dock, etc...). Keep in mind each boathouse location has unique features so the rules will vary slightly according to location and conditions. The rules are meant to keep kayakers safe above all. Learn how things are done at the boathouse you volunteer at and don't be afraid to add what you already know.**

**Be sure after you volunteer for a few hours, to take time for yourself, and paddle, learn a new skill from someone who is willing to teach you safely, or just relax.**

**➔E mail –register at <http://downtownboathouse.org/phpBB2/> (case sensitive) to be added to our list of volunteers**

**➔Our Website - [www.downtownboathouse.org](http://www.downtownboathouse.org)**