Volume 4, Fall 2026

AMERICA'S BOATING CLUB
Golden Isles

The port hole

For Boaters, By Boaters™

A quarterly publication of America's Boating Club Golden Isles

**Upcoming Events:**

**November**
10 - EXCOM Mtg
26 - Thanksgiving

**December**
4 - Litter Pickup
8 - EXCOM Mtg
TBD - Club Christmas party

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# Commander's Message



Cdr Cynthia Lamb, JN

## Great Things Happening

What a weekend! Our club hosted an extremely successful District 26 Cruise & Rendezvous, welcoming 116 participants to the Golden Isles. For a club of just 54 members, that was quite an undertaking—and so many of you helped pull it all together.

The many expressions of thanks from our visitors were tremendously gratifying. They appreciated the activities, the organization, and, above all, the hospitality they experienced here. Whether you captained a boat, drove a van, coordinated an activity, welcomed guests, or helped behind the scenes, you contributed to something special. We should all be proud of what we accomplished together.

And there are some exciting things ahead.

The Georgia Department of Natural Resources recently asked us to support its marine debris grant proposal. If funded, the project would identify and remove debris along the Georgia coast resulting from Hurricane Idalia in 2023, Hurricanes Milton and Helene in 2024, and other significant weather events.

DNR recognized that our members' firsthand knowledge of local waterways could help locate debris that may not be readily apparent in aerial imagery or existing databases. The derelict shrimp trawler Cheryl Shedd photographed on the Sapelo River earlier this year (pictured here), is exactly the kind of debris they are looking for. It is encouraging to see our local knowledge recognized as a resource for caring for the waters we enjoy.



We also have commitments from DNR and the University of Georgia Marine Extension to help us put

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**Commander's Message (cont'd from previous page)**

together a **Fishing the Georgia Coast** seminar. These partners will bring a science-based approach to fishing, helping participants understand how fish behavior, habitats, and coastal conditions influence where and when to fish. Combined with our club's practical boating knowledge, this promises to be an engaging and useful program. We look forward to sharing more as plans take shape.

A couple weeks ago, we were invited to meet with the Coast Guard Auxiliary to discuss our recent educational successes. During that conversation, I suggested working together on a boat trailering educational initiative, and they responded with enthusiasm.

With so many local boat owners trailering their boats, this program could serve a real need. Our large tidal swings, strong currents, and the wakes of large ships traveling to and from the Port of Brunswick add challenges to launching and retrieving here. We envision helping individuals and boating teams (maybe couples) build skills and confidence together, and we will be looking for members who routinely trailer to lend their experience to the effort.

On a more leisurely note, I have been talking with Sarah Cantwell, a coastal conservation coordinator with Birds Georgia, formerly Georgia Audubon, about a bird cruise around St. Simons sometime in March. We are exploring a focus on migrating shorebirds, with participating boats tuned to a designated radio channel so Sarah can describe the birds and activity we are seeing along the way. Sarah calls the spring migrations "magical." That sounds like a wonderful reason to get out on the water together!

These opportunities reflect what makes our club special: people who share their knowledge, welcome others, and find new ways to enjoy and care for our coastal waters. Stay tuned—and consider where you might like to join in.

Our club may not be big, but we sure do some cool things.

## More Than a Symbol on a Screen?

Our national organization recently asked members to complete a survey about the importance of physical Aids to Navigation—the buoys, lights, and daymarks that guide us through our waterways. It is a timely question as the Coast Guard considers how electronic navigation could change the need for some physical markers.



Much of our buoy system predates GPS, chartplotters, and smartphone navigation apps. Maintaining it requires vessels, personnel, and repairs. The Coast Guard's rationale is to concentrate resources on the most critical aids while taking advantage of modern technology.

Virtual aids would only appear as symbols on compatible electronic displays, with no physical marker at that location. However, not every chartplotter or app can receive and display virtual AIS aids.

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**More Than a Symbol (cont'd from previous page)**

Will physical markers disappear? There is no approved nationwide plan to replace them all. A Northeast proposal to remove selected buoys was suspended in October 2025 following extensive public feedback, pending further analysis. The possibility of future changes remains.



That makes our experience as recreational boaters worth documenting through the survey. Physical markers help us identify channel edges, anticipate turns, and check what our screens show. Here on Georgia's tidal coast, we also watch water flowing past buoys and pilings to judge current direction and strength. A symbol on a screen cannot provide that direct observation.

Electronic navigation is a powerful tool, but physical aids provide another layer of information—and a reference when electronics fail. Before a marker is removed, its value should be measured by the decisions it helps boaters make and the accidents it helps prevent.




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# Squadron Education Officer's Report

## Winter Doldrums



SEO Jerry Lamb, JN

It's fall: leaves are falling, the clocks are changing, and all the boating magazines are full of articles on how to winterize your boat or charter in some exotic lower-latitude locale. Luckily, Golden Isles boaters don't have to put their boats away for the year; we can keep on using them year-round. We just have to "bundle and go." We have used all our boats every month of the year, and while we now have a cozy cabin cruiser, we always used our open runabouts (being an ancient mariner, I use archaic terms) — and even Cynthia's mother went with us, albeit with a blanket.

Realistically, though, bundling and going in winter takes more prep than tossing the cooler aboard on a July afternoon, and the consequences of shoddy prep are more serious. A dunking in 55-degree water is a very different proposition from one in 85-degree water; cold shock can take your breath away before you've had a chance to regret leaving the life jacket in the locker. Boat systems are more vulnerable, too. Batteries lose capacity in the cold, fuel that's been sitting since Labor Day isn't getting any fresher, and an engine that started happily all summer may decide to sulk at the old fishing hole, a long way from the dock.

And then there's the dark. Sunset comes early and fast — around 5:30 in December. Getting caught out after dark on our winding creeks creates a major pucker factor. The marsh that looked so familiar at noon becomes a featureless black wall, and those friendly day markers have a way of hiding until you're right on top of them.

So what does all this have to do with boating education? Quite a lot, as it turns out.

First, you need to know “when to fold 'em”—going out is a trickier question in winter. Summer weather here is mostly predictable: hot, humid, and a thunderstorm around four o'clock. Besides the colder temps, winter brings cold fronts marching through, with a pleasant southwest breeze quickly clocking around to a brisk, gusty northwester behind the front. Wind against a flood tide in St. Simons Sound can build a nasty chop in short order and it seems worse when the spray is icy. Reading the forecast (and the sky) well enough to know whether you'll get home comfortably is a skill, not a guess.

Second, you need to know how to navigate with winter's tides and currents, especially in the dark. Those strong northerlies can blow water out of the creeks, making low tides lower than the tables predict — and the shortcut across the flat you took all summer may simply not be there. Add our seven-to-nine-foot tidal range and inlet currents that run like a river, and finding your way home in the dark becomes more than an academic exercise.

Third, you need to be able to troubleshoot more things yourself. Yes, Sea Tow and TowBoatUS are still out there in winter, but not in the numbers or with the alacrity of summer. Knowing why the engine won't start (and whether you can coax it to), how to

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**SEO's Report (continued from previous page)**

check your batteries and connections, and how to call for help properly on VHF/DSC can be the difference between a minor inconvenience and a long, cold wait.

So, what should you learn? In my last article, I talked about "**Getting There and Back in Georgia,**" the seminar our club is developing — navigation focused on our own waters, combining the essentials of Introduction to Navigation with the tides-and-currents know-how that makes boating here different. Understanding why, getting ready, getting there and back without running into things, and crabbing across the current: it's practically a recipe for winter boating, when knowing where you are, where the water is, and which way it's moving matters more.



For those who want to go further, USPS has rolled out its new **Marine Navigation** course, updated for today's world of electronic navigation. Paper charts and plotting tools still have their place (I wouldn't want Joshua Slocum spinning in his grave), but the course is built around how people actually navigate now — chartplotters, GPS, AIS, and smartphone apps — along with the fundamentals that let you check whether the screen is telling you the truth. It's the course that turns "push buttons and hope" into "plan the route and know why."

Don't overlook other USPS offerings, either. The weather seminar sharpens that go/no-go call, while **Engine Maintenance** and **Marine Electrical Systems** help you figure out why the motor is sulking. Many offerings are available online through America's Boating Club, so even on days too raw for you (or Cynthia's mother, blanket or no) to go out, you can still be learning from a warm living room.

We'll be reaching out soon to see “what floats your boat” as we plan next year's curriculum. Would a winter weather seminar help? A hands-on engine troubleshooting session? Something else? Let us know, and then keep an eye on GISPS.org for course dates and sign-up details.

In the meantime, bundle up, check the forecast and the tide tables, top off those batteries, and plan to be back at the dock before dark. The real doldrums are a windless patch near the equator — there's no reason to drift into the Georgia’s own winter doldrums.

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## Club Education Roundup

**By Jerry Lamb**

The Club's strong year for education continues. "**Georgia's Amazing Tides**" (aka Tides and Currents) was held on August 13 and had 27 students. **America's Boating Course®** on October 3 had 18 registered students. "**Women in Boating**" had another sold-out course on September 12.

These numbers are **fantastic** and we owe many thanks to Rick Ellis and his mastery of social and print media! Honestly, it is this kind of education success that prompted the Coast Guard Auxiliary to contact us.

We are setting up the course schedule for next year and will reach out with ideas for your vote.



*Our most recent Women in Boating class. So much fun!*

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# *Do you know...?*

## What is the #1 question that visitors to the state of Maine ask?

Go to the next page to find the answer.


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# The #1 question that visitors to the state of Maine ask is ...

"How do you get all the boats in the harbor to park in the same direction?"



## According to Google Gemini:

Boats in a harbor naturally point in the same direction because wind, tides, and currents push or pull them, so they face into the primary force acting upon them.

## Is it a real question?

Yes, it is a genuine (though famously mocked) question that tourists and first-time visitors frequently ask locals in Maine and other coastal areas.

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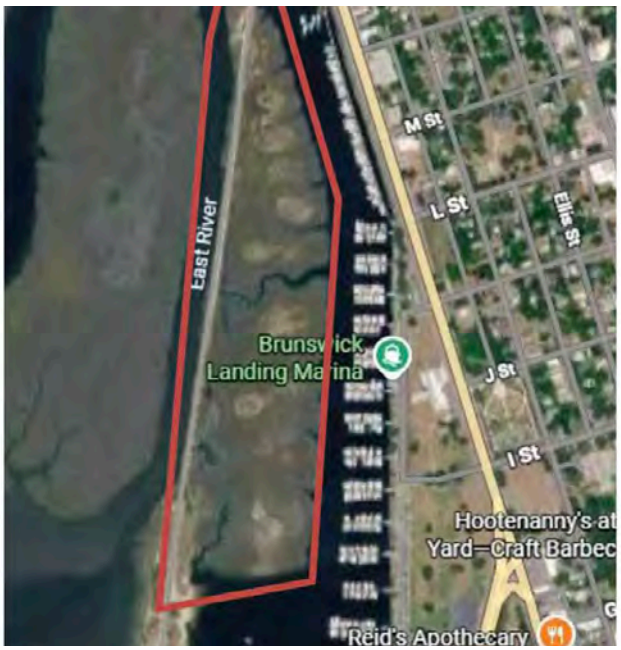
## Our Club Working Hard to Keep (the) Golden Isles Beautiful

**Submitted by: Sharon Hindery**

We all love the water, being out in nature cruising, sailing, or paddling through the pristine waterways of the Golden Isles.... but unfortunately, pristine is not always the word to use for describing our area. There is just far too much litter and flotsam messing up the marsh. Often this is caused by trash blowing out from improperly managed dumpsters, blowing out of the back of pickup trucks, of just being tossed out windows of cars driven by those who do not care.

Did you know that trash in the Walmart parking lot gets blown into the drainage ditch and eventually makes it to a tidal creek by Highway 17, and then, eventually into a river, creek, or marsh?

Keep Golden Isles Beautiful's "Adopt a Highway" groups all around Glynn County make it their mission to clean up a section of highway, boat ramp, marsh, or park on a quarterly basis to help keep these areas looking great. America's Boating Club Golden Isles has participated in this for a number of years. Previously we took care of Liberty Ship Park. This year we took on the task of Homer Wilson Way. This 1.2-mile stretch of road is located between the Brunswick River and the East River. It runs from north of the Brunswick Landing Marina Boatyard to Edward's Island. The road is unpaved; there is a small beach that you can




fish from or launch a small boat. It is a day use area used mostly by locals to fish or just enjoy. It is gated at night to prevent dumping.



This year, a group of 6-8 of our members have spent a couple of hours removing the litter from this challenging area.

June was HOT and at low tide. Last Saturday, however, was beautiful. Cool and breezy with a king tide that covered much of

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**Club Cleaning Up (continued from previous page)**

the landscape. The north wind pushed the floating debris to within reach of pickers.

Each time our little group was able to remove about 8 trash bags of stuff that did not belong where it was found. Mostly bottles, cans, grocery bags and snack bags were removed and bagged up for the county or city to pick up. As always with these events, someone finds a fun little odd thing or two to show off or keep!

Thank you to Alice & Dave Vaughan, Cheryl & Alan Shedd, Jerry & Cynthia Lamb, Randy Olson, and Rick Ellis for joining Rick and me over the past 3 pickups.

How about joining us next time – December 4th at 4 pm - again at low tide for an hour of good clean(ing) fun?







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# The Weakest Link: Anchoring deserved more respect

**Submitted by: Rick Ellis**

It was one of those gorgeous fishing afternoons along the Georgia coast. I was anchored just offshore at the mouth of the Hampton River on north St. Simons Island at a spot on the shoreward side of the sandbar. My targets: bull redfish, jacks, and perhaps a tarpon, although the only takers so far were sharks and mullet.

The waves were more forceful than usual, but nothing seemed particularly alarming. The center console rose and fell for some time but then suddenly something changed. The boat was pointing in a different direction and the breakers, which had been noticeably closer, now appeared to be moving away. Time to pull up the anchor, reposition, and get back to the business at hand.



I began hauling in the line expecting to see the familiar length of chain followed by the anchor but instead I was shocked that at the end there was only a short two feet of chain and no anchor. The ten-foot length of chain that had connected my Danforth-style anchor to the boat had snapped and it was all somewhere on the bottom.

The combined forces of wind, tide, and the boat's movement had overwhelmed the chain. It had broken like a guitar string. Fortunately, the consequences were not serious, other than cutting the day's fishing short. But the incident delivered a lesson that I should have learned long before that afternoon: anchoring is not simply a matter of throwing an anchor overboard and checking to see whether it holds.

I had heard of the 7:1 rule. I just hadn't paid much attention to it. The rule is a practical guideline for determining how much anchor rode to deploy. For a typical anchoring arrangement, it calls for approximately seven feet of rode for every foot of vertical distance between the bow's anchor attachment point and the bottom.

Consider a boat anchored in ten feet with its bow three feet above the water. The vertical distance from the attachment point to the bottom is approximately thirteen feet. Multiply that by seven, and the recommended starting point is 91 feet of rode.

That may seem excessive when the weather is pleasant and the boat appears settled. But adequate scope helps keep the rode's pull on the anchor more horizontal, allowing the anchor to dig into the bottom rather than being pulled upward and potentially dislodged.

A 5:1 ratio may be adequate in favorable conditions, while stronger winds and more demanding conditions can require additional scope. The correct amount depends on the anchor, bottom conditions, current, wind,

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**The Weakest Link (continued from previous page)**

waves, and available swinging room. As I learned, the amount of rode deployed is not a trivial detail. It is a fundamental part of anchoring safely.

Wind and current create a steady pull on an anchored boat while waves add another dimension: motion. As a boat rises and falls on the waves, the tension on the rode changes. When the rode becomes taut suddenly, the resulting shock load can be considerably greater than the steady force alone. Even two-to-three-foot waves can produce substantial shock loads on the anchoring rode especially if the anchor line is submerged at an excessively steep angle.

Today, I'm more conscious of anchoring. My current boat now has a trolling motor that handles most of my fishing-positioning duties, but there are still times when dropping the anchor is needed. When I anchor, I pay attention to the amount of rode I deploy rather than simply letting out what seems sufficient.

When I first recounted the story of my broken chain to fellow boaters, the suggestion was made that perhaps that I had a weak link in the chain. They may well have been right. The chain could have had a defect, suffered corrosion, or been inadequate for the loads it encountered.

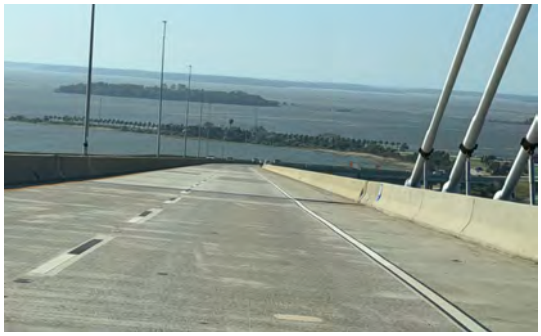
However, after reviewing my former approach to anchoring, I came to a different conclusion.

The weakest link was not necessarily the chain… It was the captain.

## What You Should Know About King Tides

As you all know, we recently experienced king tides in our area. The water levels were amazing! Those extremely high water levels were caused by both both astronomic conditions and some weather-related ones.

When the Moon and Sun are in alignment during a full moon (which we recently had), their combined pull produces higher high tides and lower low tides, known as spring tides. When that alignment coincides with the Moon being especially close to Earth (perigee), the tidal range can be even greater. Add to that strong, persistent onshore winds that can push water a foot or more above an already-high king tide. The astronomic impacts are reflected in tide predictions; the weather impacts are not.



In this photo, taken while traveling southbound on the Sidney Lanier Bridge, the first set of trees you see is the Jekyll Causeway. It looks like an island.

From a boating perspective, these high water levels leave less clearance under bridges, require additional rode when anchoring, can create floating debris hazards as the higher than normal water levels can lift logs and debris from shorelines and marsh edges into waterways, and can affect trailer positions at boat ramps.

When king tides and onshore winds combine, check more than the tide table—plan for the water levels you may actually encounter.

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# A Refrigerator Lesson Aboard Sam McGee

**By Stephen Luta, JN**

I like to share my mistakes in the hope that others can learn from them. Here's my latest: I may have just spent $3,000 on a refrigerator-freezer I didn't need. But I've wanted an Isotherm 160 drawer refrigerator-freezer ever since I saw one at Trawlerfest, so I'm still glad I bought it.

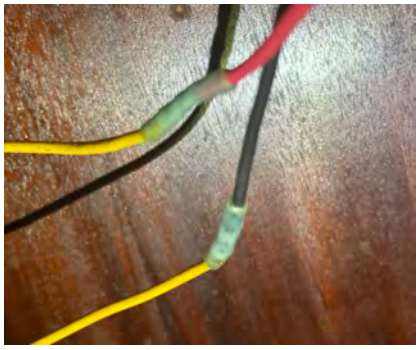


The refrigerator that came with my boat, Sam McGee, never worked well on 12-volt DC power. I assumed it was drawing too much power from the batteries during days at anchor.

At the end of my first year of ownership, I spent $1,000 to add 400 watts of solar panels. The refrigerator performed a little better. At the end of the second year, I spent another $1,000 on an additional 400 watts of solar.

By the fourth year, its performance on DC power was still dismal. I finally bought the Isotherm, and I'm ecstatic with it.

Then came the discovery. While removing the old refrigerator, I disassembled the surrounding cabinetry, disconnected the electrical connections and removed the 10 screws holding the unit in place. When I pulled it out, I found a damaged wire with only about half its copper strands still connected inside the insulation. I also found two yellow wires coming up through the floor, spliced to a red wire and a black wire. The wiring certainly raised questions.



The cooling coils were so packed with dust that I initially thought I was looking at a solid piece. There was no way to clean them without taking apart the cabinetry and pulling the refrigerator out.



Could those problems have explained the old refrigerator's poor performance? I may have been buying upgrades before fully investigating what was wrong.

So now I have $2,000 in solar panels that I don't regret buying and a $3,000 refrigerator-freezer I've always wanted. That's a $5,000 investment—and a lesson worth sharing.

Before you break out your wallet, take a thorough look at what you already have.

(P.S. I wish I had taken the United States Power Squadrons Marine Electricals Systems class.)


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# DNR Backtracks on Increasing Dock Lengths

How long is too long for a private dock stretching across Georgia's salt marsh? That question sparked widespread concern when proposed DNR rules would have allowed docks reaching as far as 1,650 feet—nearly one-third of a mile—across publicly owned marsh.



*Alice Keyes of 100 Miles speaking at our club social in September*

At our September social at The Bookery in Brunswick, Alice Keyes of One Hundred Miles helped members understand the issue's importance for both the environment and boating safety. For our club, protecting the marsh and protecting our waterways go hand in hand.

Conservationists warned that longer docks could trap marsh debris that smothers vegetation, harm wildlife habitat, and create additional marine debris during hurricanes—a concern for anyone navigating our coastal waters.

Public response was overwhelming. According to The Current, only four of the 342 written comments supported the proposed rules as written. On October 27, the DNR board's Coastal Committee recommended limiting fixed walkways to 1,000 feet, with a variance allowing up to 1,100 feet. The revised rules still require a full board vote, which is currently scheduled for December 1.

The change is encouraging, although concerns about other provisions remain. We appreciate Alice bringing this issue to our club and helping us become better-informed coastal stewards. Georgia's marshes are part of what makes boating here extraordinary.

## Photos from the September Social









Photos courtesy of Stephen Luta

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# *Through an Artist's Eyes: Watercolors of Our Coast*

Artist and club member Eileen Berta captures the quiet beauty of Georgia's coast and its inhabitants in these beautiful watercolors. Eileen is often inspired from photographs she takes while she and her husband, Frank, boat in the area.




*"Ride to Driftwood Beach"*


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# *Through an Artist's Eyes (cont'd)*




*"Which way did they go?"*

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# District 26 Cruise & Rendezvous Hosted by America's Boating Club Golden Isles: A Huge Success!

Our club has just 54 members, yet we welcomed 116 registrants representing eight of the district's nine squadrons to one of the biggest District 26 Cruise & Rendezvous ever. Thirty-two of our members helped make it happen. I am so proud of this club and grateful to each of you.

The scale of what we accomplished deserves a moment of appreciation. Together, we coordinated and staffed 15 separate activities. We arranged lunches on St. Simons at four venues, dinners at two, and lunches on Jekyll at three. Three drivers kept two 15-passenger vans moving through at least a dozen shuttle runs.

Getting 90 people out on the water was an undertaking all its own: three launch locations, nine member boats, more than 20 captains and crew, two dockmasters, two route planners and narration writers, and two commercial sightseeing vessels. Behind those numbers were countless hours of planning, coordinating, answering questions, adjusting arrangements, and making sure everyone was accommodated.

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**Cruise & Rendezvous article (continued from previous page)**

And then there were the personal touches. Our welcome bags prompted amazement, especially the handmade oyster shell ornaments featuring a St. Simons nautical chart, the hand-packed candied pecans, and the generous assortment of gifts. Those details helped our guests feel they had arrived somewhere special.

The feedback has been wonderful. Many guests told us this may have been the best Cruise & Rendezvous they have ever attended. That praise belongs to you—to everyone who planned, organized, captained, crewed, drove, welcomed, prepared, set up, cleaned up, or stepped in when something needed doing.

You gave our guests more than a full weekend of activities. You made them feel welcome, cared for, and part of our boating community. Thank you.



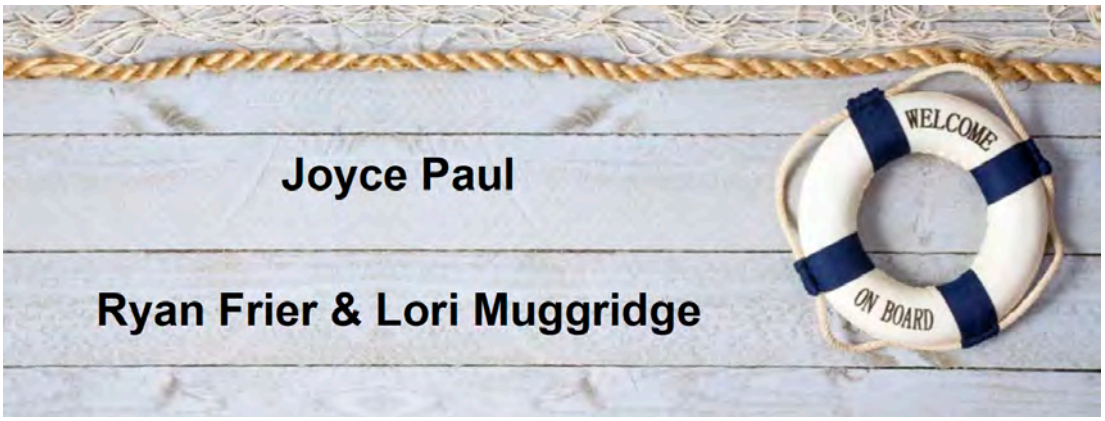






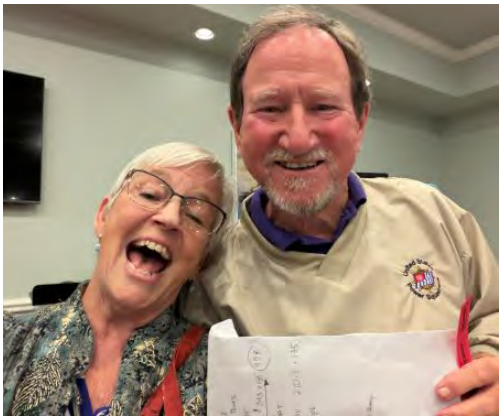
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# Golden Isles Welcomes its Newest Members!




## More Photos from the Cruise & Rendezvous










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## CONTRIBUTE TO OUR NEWSLETTER!

**Please submit an article, picture, or even a link to a boating story or video that you feel other club members may enjoy. Please send all newsletter content to Cynthia Lamb.**




*The Porthole* is the official publication of America's Boating Club® Golden Isles sponsored by the United States Power Squadrons®. The National website is **www.americasboatingclub.org**. Our Club website is **www.gisps.org**. You may also follow us on Facebook at **https://www.facebook.com/GISPS/** and on **Instagram**








Our Club is part of the world's largest recreational boating organization with more than 17,000 members. We learn together, boat together, and help each other and other boaters on the water and on land.

The only requirements for membership are a keen interest in boating-related activities and an eagerness to meet like-minded people whether power, or sail, or paddle boaters; however, **you don't need a boat to join**. Contact us through our website or Facebook page if you would like more information.

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