



# BUILD A BOAT

FAMILIES WHO BUILD  
TOGETHER, SAIL TOGETHER

BY SOUTH SOUND STAFF // PHOTOS BY JULIA SUMPTER

SOME families feel accomplished if they tackle a week's worth of laundry and go grocery shopping during a weekend. Others look forward to eating their weight in bacon during a fabulous Sunday brunch following church. And then there are the families who gather at the Gig Harbor BoatShop at Eddon Boatyard – to build a boat.



All it takes is a team of two to five people, two long days, and some elbow grease, and by Sunday you can be sailing away on a 12-foot, 90-pound, salt bay skiff, a sturdy flat-bottomed wooden boat that's easy to row.

"The response (to the program) has been 100 percent positive," said John Humphrey, the community development director at Gig Harbor BoatShop. "It's the most beautiful thing to see, in many cases three generations, working together on a common project – kids, parents, and grandpas."

The program, which began about three years ago, currently takes place about once a month. There is room for three teams at a time, and the spots fill up quickly. The cost is \$595 per team and includes all of the materials needed to build the boat and expert instruction on measuring, gluing, sawing, beveling, planing, sanding, and joining.

Humphrey enjoys watching how the process of building a boat helps build a better family dynamic. "Saturday, the young people come in and are unsure ... and anxious and not even sure if they want to be there. Fiddling with their phones," he said. They are asked to put their phones away. "The next day rolls around and the very same kids come in, strut into the boat shop and check their tools ... and their supplies, and there is this confidence that they have. And their parents' response is that they haven't spent this much time having fun with their kids in years.

"And the grandparents just have this quiet, satisfied happy smile and you know exactly what that means." »







Humphrey built a boat with his son last year when the boy was 12. His son said that one day he will tell his own kids that he made the boat with his own two hands alongside their grandpa. “I pretty much teared up,” he said.

A military chaplain built a boat last fall and was so inspired by the experience, he started bringing veterans who recently returned to the country to the BoatShop for a calming, therapeutic experience working with a team to create something functional and beautiful.

The nonprofit program began thanks to longtime volunteer David Gaffney. It’s made affordable thanks to companies like Edensaw, who provide supplies at low cost; membership dues; and, this year, grants from the Baker Foundation and the MJF Foundation.

“We want to try to keep the program as affordable as possible,” Humphrey said. “Families not only get to take home a boat, but the most important thing they take home is memories. The memories will last a lifetime – and so will the boat.”



## DETAILS

Teams of two to five people (ages 8 and up) can build a boat during a weekend at Gig Harbor BoatShop at the historic Eddon Boatyard, 3805 Harborview Drive. Cost is \$595 per team. Cost includes all materials except for the boat finish. Oars and related materials sold separately. Classes fill quickly. Learn more at [gigharborboatshop.org](http://gigharborboatshop.org).

MIDDLE BOAT PHOTO COURTESY GIG HARBOR BOATSHOP