

## KIDS + BOATING = CHANGED LIVES

What do you do when you want to help kids who are adrift in life, change course and set a bearing for safe harbor? According to Dr. Huey Barnett, “You put that kid on the water with a positive adult role model.” Dr. Barnett strongly believes in touching the lives of at-risk youth by letting them experience adventures on the water with positive adult role models. His successful track record working with at-risk students in the Gulf Coast Area is proof that he is on to something very important.

Huey has been working with at-risk youth enrolled in the Bridgeport Communities In Schools (BCIS) program for the past ten years. He has also established a broad network of community volunteers, businesses and organizations who support his efforts to provide these students and their family members with the support and services they need. Over 1,300 BCIS students receive services through this program each year. “Some of these kids are just going through normal, growing-up situations,” Dr. Barnett said, “but others are experiencing situations that many adults would find devastating. It helps when these kids have a positive adult role model to provide support and encouragement.”

Huey has recruited some Bay Area boaters to reach out to students who need to know that there is something better to look forward to than the small world in which they struggle to survive. Community leaders like Johnny White, owner of a local State Farm Insurance Agency, and Capt. Roy Newberry Sr., a well known sail boat enthusiast, have participated in the program by taking young people under their wings and letting them experience the adventure of being on the water. White has taken students fishing in his off shore power boat and, as he puts it, “The kids were excited out of their duffel bags. And, believe it or not, they actually caught fish.” Capt. Roy Newberry works with kids in a different way. Capt. Roy is an avid, international sailor and a serious contender when it comes to racing his sail boat around the Gulf of Mexico. He is also very active in the local Sea Scouts program operated out of Lakewood Yacht Club and continues to have a significant, positive impact on kid's lives through these programs.

Two years ago Huey secured agreements with the BCIS program, Youth Educational Support Services (YESS), Galveston County Historical Society, and the Texas Seaport Museum that permitted students to participate in the Elissa Sail Training Program. This year will be the second year in which students will be included in regular monthly sail training classes to learn about the Elissa, an 1877 fully restored Tall Ship. For students who successfully complete the sail training program, stay in school and show improvement in behavior and academic work, there is an exciting adventure waiting for them. These students receive a full day sail on the Elissa and are permitted to be part of the Elissa crew in setting sails and participating in other adventurous duties while the tall ship is under way. This is an experience that many local sailors would give up their compasses to share.

Believing that touching kid's lives and making good memories can best be done on the water, Dr. Barnett takes every opportunity to place young people there with positive adult role models. "It is amazing to see the change that can come over a kid when he or she is having fun experiencing new adventures on a sail boat or a power boat," he said. "They are exposed to a whole new world, one in which they are challenged, build dreams and gain hope for a better life." He adds that it also gives kids a sense of significance when they can brag to their friends, family and teachers about their "adventures on the high seas"!

Dr. Barnett feels so strongly about his mission that he has developed a special program called "Outpost 001". In this program students will learn how those "boring" school courses actually have practical value and can even be interesting. Examples include learning how to read navigational charts and weather maps, plotting courses, and even learning how to compute the cost of operating a boat. Students also learn how to be good citizens and develop positive character traits while working together as a team where each member must be dependable and accountable.

The "hook" that will catch and hold the kid's interest in Outpost 001 will be having their own boat, which Dr. Barnett is still looking for. When the proper boat is acquired, it will serve as the student's club house where they will meet on a regular basis, not only to learn seamanship and academics, but also how to maintain and operate a vessel. The big attraction will be taking the boat out for a sail or a fishing trip as a reward for staying in school and doing well. Local resources have already been identified, including adult volunteers who will be mentors and teachers who will provide the educational component. "We have commitments for just about all the resources we need," Dr. Barnett said. "Now, all we need is the boat."

Dr. Barnett's organization is a 501-c-3 organization, which means that someone can donate their boat and receive a nice tax deduction. Huey is confident that the right person will come forward to donate a boat to Outpost 001 when they become aware of the opportunities they can provide for this special group of young people. He is aware of two other youth programs in Florida that receive fifteen to twenty donated boats each year. "I believe that somewhere in the Gulf Coast boating community there are those who believe in our cause and will help us develop our Outpost 001 program," he said.

"At this time we are looking for any boat donation – power or sail," Dr. Barnett noted. "However, we are specifically looking for a 40-50 foot power boat and a 35-45 foot sail boat. We have volunteers who are competent sailors and a Coast Guard licensed power boat Captain ready to cast off. In addition, and even more importantly, we have a lot of young people eager to get on the water." Dr. Barnett gives his listeners something to think about when he says, "Be willing to make an investment in something that is bigger than you are and longer lasting".