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JOURNAL OF PADDLESPORTS EDUCATION

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APRIL ZILG

KOKATAT INSTRUCTOR OF THE MONTH

>> NOTES FROM THE FIELD:

ACA CERTIFICATION

>> 2015 RESOLUTIONS

>> STREAM TO SEA INITIATIVE

JANUARY 2015

JPE

January 2015

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Photo: Rob Hurst



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April Zilg

January 2015 Kokatat Instructor of the Month

April is an avid paddler, an ACA Level 2: Essentials of SUP Instructor, and an ACA SUP Yoga Instructor. What started as a recreational hobby in 2009, became so much more when she got into racing. Today April is a top paddler on the east coast, placing first in several championships and in the top ten in the Carolina Cup and the Battle of the Paddle. When she's not competing, she's giving lessons, teaching clinics, guiding SUP yoga or SUP surfing. She teaches in Wrightsville Beach with Carolina Paddleboard Co. where she helped start the Carolina Jr Waterman's team, a program to help kids become better, safer watermen. April is a Hobie team rider and



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a regular contributor to Distressedmullet.com and "Local Sessions" surf magazine. April looks forward to continuing to grow as a paddler and spread the love of the





ACA: April, it sounds like you have had a wide variety of SUP experiences! Can you tell us about one of your most memorable trips?

April: Traveling throughout India in 2012, and paddling with so many different people will always be one of my top favorite trips. I gave lessons, we went on excursions to remote islands, through backwaters, and I lived with the Surfing (now also SUPing) Swamis for a few months. We packed up inflatables and traveled through the Himalayas to paddle rapids, rivers, and the highest altitude lakes in the country; my companions and I currently hold the record for highest altitude SUPed at 16,020 feet.

ACA: Thanks April, and congratulations on being January 2015's Kokatat Instructor of the month! **We would like to extend a big THANKS to [Kokatat](#) for sponsoring our Instructor of the Month Program!**

Notes from the Field:

A Story of the ACA Certification Process

By April Zilg

Two years ago, I first heard that the ACA was going to start offering Stand Up Paddle lessons and instructor certifications. I was skeptical. At that point I realized that most watersport businesses saw the booming SUP industry and all wanted to jump in it to make some extra money. I didn't think the ACA was any different.

While many other organizations and businesses did jump on the SUP wagon and started offering lessons and certifications without much experience or research, the ACA took their time and developed a very in depth course. As many in the Wrightsville Beach area can attest, we've seen people trying to give SUP lessons while prone paddling a surf long board and yelling at young women trying to "teach" them to paddle, incorrectly, usually in a windy channel for their first lesson.

These businesses just trying to make a dollar are detrimental to the sport.

Even up until my ACA course, I remained skeptical. I assumed they would just take the curriculum from either canoe or kayak and copy and paste it to the SUP curriculum and call it a day. It wasn't until we



were in the class and went through the entire skill set for SUP level 1 and 2 that it became clear that the ACA had done their homework. Some of the paddle strokes on first glance seemed pointless or redundant for moving the board around, however it makes a lot of sense when they put the small parts together for a more advanced stroke.

Many times as an instructor, you'll have

a student that isn't getting something, and no matter how hard you try, "Drop your top arm, straighten your knees, rotate your core... etc." they just aren't getting the stroke you're teaching. The benefit of learning all of the small parts of strokes taught in the ACA Instructor course is that you will be able to catch small problems in your student's stroke before they get frustrated. This makes it simpler to correct and easier for them to digest. Although a healthy amount of time was spent on safety and rescue, this course was not TOO safety oriented. As an instructor, there are certain responsibilities you have to your students, gear you should have, and external factors you should always consider. This was made crystal clear. What the course did not do is bog the instructor down with what-ifs, too much suggested gear to tote along, or unjustifiable scenarios. Some time was spent talking about ACA-provided insurance, legal technicalities, and what you gain by being an ACA certified instructor. Instructors who have earned an ACA certification are well trained, and backed by a strong, tried and true legal team.



The ACA is working to set itself apart. They do not award certifications to everyone taking the class unless everyone in the class can display the skills required at a level suitable for teaching others. It is more than likely you will pay \$300 for the level 1 and 2 instructor course and not get it. That would turn most people off. Who wants to spend that kind of money and not walk away with the instructor certification? This becomes a philosophical argument on my part, “What kind of person are you?” One the one hand, people could not take the course because they are worried they won’t walk away with the certification. They would want to put their money into a course with instant gratification. Fine, they will never carry the label of “ACA Certified Instructor.” On the other hand, an instructor candidate may not walk away with an instant certification, but have to work hard, develop skills they were lacking, and demonstrate them to the instructor trainer to earn their certification at a later date. That person would have to work for the title, and will value the certification because it was something that took time and effort. The ACA certification holds merit.



A whitewater SUP Certification Workshop, hosted at the US National Whitewater Center in Charlotte, NC.

The ACA provides courses for flatwater, whitewater, and ocean surf SUP environments.

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Of the estimated 6.14 million tons of debris that enter marine environments each year, 80% of it is land based trash that enters from freshwater rivers and streams. Who better to help prevent the accumulation of marine debris than us paddlers? The ACA has been implementing an on-going Stream to Sea Initiative that will equip users with the knowledge and tools necessary to clean navigable waterways and paddling environments while recreating. Utilizing the paddling community, one that already has a vested interest in the health of the nation's waters, is an effective way to help remediate the growing amounts of debris that affect marine environments. Employing paddlers, a virtually untapped resource, in freshwater streams and rivers provides a sustainable network of stewards dedicated to reducing debris accumulation before it reaches coastal environments.

This is a three-pronged effort to educate, motivate, and model proactive on-water stewardship practices to curb marine debris through the following programs:



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New Year's Resolutions

From the ACA Staff



Wade Blackwood, Executive Director

“Teach my daughter to fly fish and my son to ride a bike.”



TJ Turner, Education & Outreach Coordinator

“Make every suit I wear this year a drysuit.”



Candy Patten, Insurance Coordinator

“I’ve made a list of hiking destinations. I want to visit them all!”



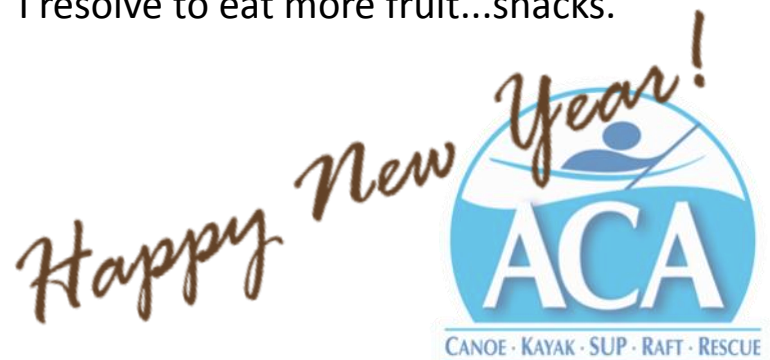
Hillary Chesson, Membership Coordinator

“I resolve to eat more fruit...snacks.”



Catharine Lloyd, Communications Coordinator

“To Give Up Coffee. Just Kidding.”



We look forward to helping you achieve your paddling goals in 2015!



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SUP: Leashes & Lifejackets



The ACA's new PSA, SUP: Leashes & Lifejackets, makes it clear to standup paddleboarders what types of leashes and lifejackets are appropriate for different water venues. The video is intended to educate all those new to stand-up paddleboarding (SUP), as well as those who have experience with the sport but are unaware of leash and lifejacket best practices. Some of the rules and recommendations regarding these pieces of equipment may surprise you.

Please visit the ACA's [YouTube channel](#) to watch the video.



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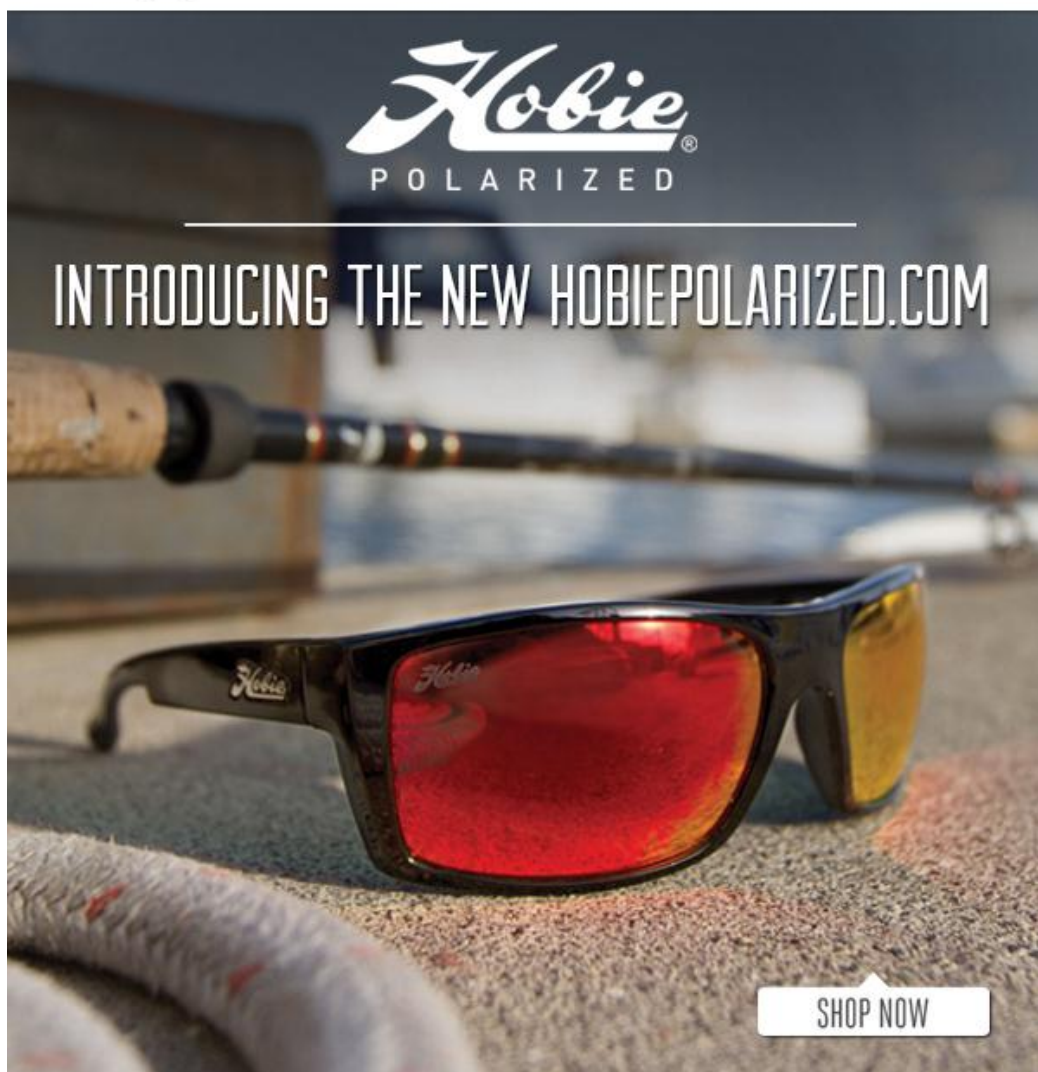
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Something Brand New in the Paddling Safety World!

What's one thing that all paddling instructors need? Safety information, presented to viewers in an entertaining way! Paddling safety is our #1 priority, so we've created two **animated videos** in an effort to deliver fun and engaging safety messages that stick.

[Click here](#) to check out the new animated videos or visit www.americancanoe.org/animatedvideos

We believe the simple messages contained in these humorous videos have the power to save lives. But we need your help. **Please show the videos to your students, email them to family and friends, share them on your social media accounts, and post them to your website or blog.**

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