

Volume 4, Issue 6 | November 2018

PADDLE

ACA | Canoe - Kayak - SUP - Raft - Rescue

**Celebrating a
Paddlesports Legend**

SAM FOWLKES



ACA State Director Elections Now Underway

Instructors of the Month

ACA Youth Videos Released Online



Recognizing Sam Fowlkes' *lifelong dedication* to paddlesports

Sam Fowlkes became a certified ACA instructor 40 years ago and soon stood out as a leader in the field. Over the years, his overarching goal has been to “make the world a better place to paddle.” To that end, Fowlkes has shaped curricula, helped develop programs, mentored instructors, and reached thousands of paddlers through his courses.

“Sam Fowlkes has been a mentor, friend, co-instructor for over 20 years. He has an undying devotion to paddlesports education, safety, new ideas and the tedious work of multiple ACA committees,” said Landmark Learning Executive Director Justin S. Padgett, M.S., paramedic, WEMT. “Sam has an uncommon level of patience and persistence that has really helped all of us grow and strengthen the national pool of paddlesport educators across the U.S.,” Padgett added.

Fowlkes' involvement with the ACA began in 1977 when he certified as an ACA whitewater kayak instructor while working at Nantahala Outdoor Center as a guide and instructor. At the time, Fowlkes recalled, “I was already a college educator, and my paddling skills from racing and guiding were peaking,” so the instructor certification seemed like a natural fit.

“Sam exemplifies unwavering dedication towards providing the highest quality both in his personal paddlesports instruction as well as in the national policies and curriculum he has helped develop. His years of

Sam Fowlkes has been a recognized leader in paddlesports for 40 years.



commitment to the Safety Education & Instruction Council have helped shape the ACA's National Paddlesports Instruction Program for years to come,” said Christopher Stec, ACA Chief Operating Officer and Instructor Trainer Educator.

David Mason, one of Fowlkes' lifelong ACA friends, commented that Sam is a “great friend, even better neighbor. After all these years of teaching rescue, at times, in some God-awful weather, his commitment and professionalism are more than worthy of recognition.” The two met when Fowlkes took his first ACA instructor certification course 40 years ago.

Fowlkes went on to become a Whitewater Canoe Instructor (1978), a Whitewater Canoe Instructor Trainer (1981), a Swiftwater Rescue Instructor (1995), as well as an Instructor Trainer Educator in Level 5 Advanced Swiftwater Rescue and Level 4 Whitewater Canoe for the ACA. In addition, Fowlkes is an In-

structor Trainer for Rescue 3 International and a NOLS Wilderness EMT.

“Sam Fowlkes is an excellent educator,” said Tom Burroughs, ACA L-5 SWR Instructor Trainer. “One of my favorite things about him is his willingness to consider new ideas and discuss the reasoning behind the techniques that we teach. His ability to integrate new information and methods into what he does is inspiring!”

Mike Mather, ACA Level 5: Advanced Swiftwater Rescue Instructor Trainer Educator, added, “Sam Fowlkes is a silver-tongued Southern gentleman who represents the history and the future of swiftwater rescue. In his 40 years of educating, Sam has never stopped learning in his pursuit to make paddling safer and rescues more effective. He always gives credit to the original rescue idea creators and future innovative thinkers alike while never being one to boast of his invaluable contributions.”



Fowlkes tackles Bull Sluice in 1976. This Class V rapid on the Chattooga River separates South Carolina and Georgia.

Fowlkes' other ACA leadership positions include: 12 years as Dixie Division Divisional Instruction Facilitator, 4 years as SEIC Vice Chair (1996-2000), chair of the Safety, Education and Instruction Council from 2004 to 2007, and 5 years as a member of the ACA Board of Directors.

"Sam has been a friend and a mentor to me – and many other instructors – for many years," said Robin Pope, ACA Board Vice President and multi-discipline Instructor Trainer. "He has a wealth of knowledge about rescue and boating, that is combined with a genuine passion and enthusiasm for sharing that knowledge. It's been a privilege to work with him and learn from him."

In addition to receiving the ACA's Excellence in Instruction Award in 2005, Fowlkes received the ACA Joe Pena Volunteer of the Year Award in 2002. For the last 15 years Fowlkes focus has been on swiftwater rescue instruction and instructor training. His interests lie in making rescue techniques adaptable and relevant to paddlers.

"Sam is known for his willingness to try new approaches and see if there's a better or different way to do things. He didn't really 'write the book' on swiftwater rescue – but that's only because he was so busy testing things that ended up in the book," said Pope.

Fowlkes gives special attention to providing a multi-level educational experience. He has been providing professional level training for colleges, universities, agencies, outfitters, summer camps and clubs for 30 years. He has been on the teaching faculty of Western Carolina University for the past 11 years, schooling students in water-based sports education.

"Sam Fowlkes' commitment to safety and rescue is unparalleled. He has inspired many of us to be the best we can be as Safety and Rescue Instructors," said Julie Munger, chief executive officer of Sierra Rescue Inc./Rescue 3 West. "His ability not to take himself too seriously and his sense of humor make him an absolute pleasure to work with. He has connected people from all parts of the globe, is always open to new ideas and resources, and is committed to river runners, rivers and their enjoyment through safety."

Aaron Peeler, outdoor school director with the U.S. National Whitewater Center, added, "I had the honor of taking my initial swiftwater rescue instructor course under Sam almost 15 years ago. Since then, Sam has been a mentor to me not only as an instructor but as a lead-

er. Without Sam I don't believe the Safety and Rescue Committee would be the team it is today. Due to Sam's leadership and dedication the ACA Swiftwater Rescue

Program has become one of the top programs in the country, if not the top program."

(Continued on page 25)

Sam thanks his paddlesports mentors

Ramone Eaton, Bill Mason and Bob Benner heavily influenced me. Jon Lugbill and Davey Hearn were my C-1 idols. John Burton (1972 Olympian) and Tom Foster were my canoe ITs in 1978. Later on, my IT mentors were Bunny Johns and David Mason. These folks were whitewater canoe pioneers who pushed the instruction side of canoeing.

In addition to his early mentors, Fowlkes also gives credit to the following for inspiring him throughout his career:

Payson Kennedy, Angus Morrison, Kent Ford, Gordon Grant, Steve Holmes, Tom Foster, Kim Whitley, Charlie Wilson, Gordon Black, Wayne Dickert, Jimmy Holcombe, Slim Ray, Frankie Hubbard and Robin Pope.

Sam Fowlkes' paddlesport accomplishments

Certifications

- American Red Cross Water Safety Instructor 1969 + Canoeing Instructor + Instructor Trainer 1988
- American Canoe Association certified Whitewater Kayak Instructor 1977 + Whitewater Canoe Instructor 1978
- N.C. EMT - B 1978 + 2009 - present
- Wilderness Medical Institute – Wilderness EMT 2013- present
- American Canoe Association Whitewater Canoe Instructor Trainer 1981
- Rescue 3 International Swiftwater Rescue Instructor 1994
- American Canoe Association Dixie Division Instruction Chair 1990-2002
- American Canoe Association Safety Education + Instruction Vice-chair 1996-2000
- American Canoe Association Safety Education + Instruction Chair 2003-2007
- American Canoe Association Swiftwater Rescue Instructor 1995
- American Canoe Whitewater Canoe Instructor Trainer Educator 1997 - present
- Swiftwater Rescue Instructor Trainer Educator 1998 - present
- American Canoe Association Board of Directors 2004-2015

Awards + Recognitions

- BSA – Scoutmaster Award of Merit – 1994 + District Award of Merit 1996
- BSA Silver Beaver Award 1997
- American Canoe Association Joe Pina Volunteer of the Year Award 2002
- American Canoe Association Dixie Division Volunteer of the Year 2004
- American Canoe Association Excellence in Instruction Award 2005
- [Higgins + Langley Special Commendation for Excellence in Swiftwater Rescue 2014 International Award](#)



Publications + Presentations

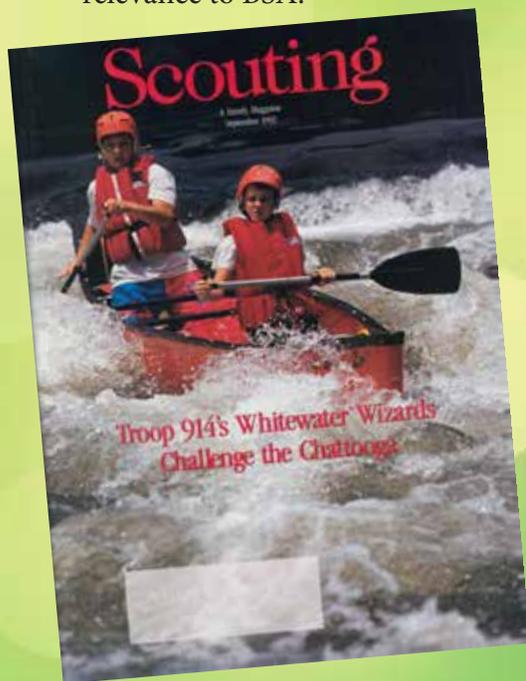
- BSA *Scouting Magazine* (September 1992) – Article: “Canoeing the Mighty Chattooga”
- BSA Canoeing Merit Badge Book – Chapter writer: “Paddling a Canoe” + “Maneuvers”
- BSA Whitewater Merit Badge Book – Advisor
- *Paddler Magazine* (November-December 2007) – Article: “Mastering the S Turn”
- *Paddler Magazine* (September-October 2008) – Article: “Perfecting the Forward Ferry”
- International Boating & Safety Summit 2003 – Presentation: “Interaction of Motorized + Non-motorized Craft”
- Whitewater Safety Symposium 2004 – Presentation: “Whitewater Accidents – Causes + Prevention”
- ACA Swiftwater Rescue Conference 2013 – Director + Chief Instructor Trainer Educator
- ACA Swiftwater Rescue Conference 2015 – Director + Chief Instructor Trainer Educator
- ACA Swiftwater Rescue Conference 2017 – Co-Director + Chief Instructor Trainer Educator



Learn more about Sam

ACA: You've also been very active with the Boy Scouts of America, from the Council level to the National level, how has your dedication to serve America's youth intersected with your passion for paddlesports instruction?

Fowlkes: As an ACA whitewater canoe IT, I saw an opportunity to help my local troop (T-914) develop a quality-paddling program. We started a canoeing program from the ground up in 1990. We were featured on the cover of *Scouting Magazine* in the September 1992 issue. This led to more exposure for the ACA canoeing program and its relevance to BSA.



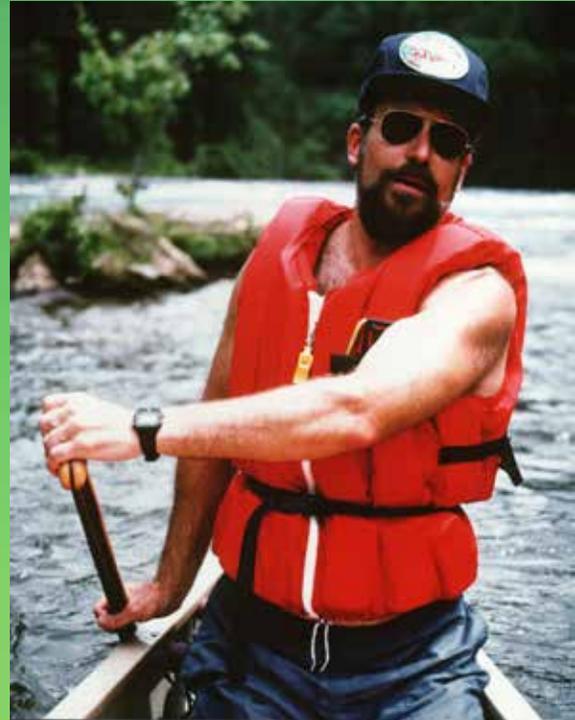
Around 2000 BSA asked the ACA to help rewrite/revise the Canoeing merit badge book. I was fortunate to be asked to be part of the rewrite team and

wrote two chapters. Our location on the Tuckasegee River was perfect for photos and BSA took many illustrative photos using T-914 scouts I had trained as model paddlers. The BSA/ACA safety video "Reading the Rhythms of Rivers and Rapids" was primarily filmed here as well. ACA and BSA have become partners in promoting safe boating practices benefiting youth far into the future. I am extremely proud of my volunteer time as a BSA leader. My Scouter colleagues gave me the nickname "Whitewater Sam."

ACA: What advice do you have for those paddlers who have never taken a 'formal' ACA instruction course?

Fowlkes: ACA skill development courses are great fun and worth your time and effort. We focus on your safety and comfort using the "tried and true" principles developed by the experts in the field. Once you can execute the basic strokes and maneuvers, your fun factor and confidence will propel you into the cool zone of paddlesports.

Paddling lakes and rivers is an environmental education while exercising in the outdoors. The more you know the more you can pass on to your family and friends. Learn from the ACA experts!



ACA: As a past chairman of the SEIC, and current chair of the Safety & Rescue Committee, explain your motivation to volunteer in these national level capacities.

Fowlkes: This started at the local/regional level as instruction chair for the Dixie Division. This position gave me a seat on SEIC. I wanted to share my talents and expertise at the national/international level. Seeing a need for leadership I was voted in as vice chair then chair of SEIC. This provided me a vehicle to give back and do my part to "make the world a better place to paddle."

(Continued on page 27)





ACA: From your time as chair of the SEIC, what noteworthy accomplishments occurred under your leadership?

Fowlkes: Facilitating the refinement of the ACA curricula in all disciplines of L-1 to L-5 as a professional level program. Pushing the Safety and Rescue program with a refined curriculum with Robin Pope. Starting the process of requiring ACA instructors to be CPR and First Aid certified.

ACA: ACA. What has been the most eye-opening experience(s) you have had while teaching paddling courses?

Fowlkes: Successfully rescuing an instructor candidate from a full on heads down foot entrapment using a boat based (tandem open canoe) rescue with current ACA Chief Operating Officer Christopher Stec. My closest call had a positive result. Lucky.

ACA: You've guided rafts, taught kayaking at the collegiate level, and certified canoeing instructors in a wide range of lake and river venues. However, when paddlers think of your legacy to paddlesports education and instruction, they tend to gravitate to your whitewater rescue courses. How has your role in the Safety & Rescue community helped shape the ACA's National Paddlesports Instruction Program?

ACA: Over the past 40 years, what were significant evolutions of paddlesports teaching techniques/theory?

Fowlkes: Professional level curricula with professional level detailed instruction clarification of strokes and maneuvers. Technology using video reviews, excellent instructional films and the Go Pro video revolution. The online transformation using email, websites and mobile smartphone apps. Drone photography is the next wave of technology for instructors.





Fowlkes: We assembled a group of experts on the Safety and Rescue Committee who are second to none and command a lot of respect from other disciplines. We are the go-to experts who advise the other SEIC committees on matters involving water safety and rescue.

This group has been influential in bringing “prevent and minimize” principles to all disciplines. The three Swiftwater Rescue Conferences have been multi discipline with the latest cutting-edge techniques for river-oriented watercraft.

ACA: If you could paddle anywhere tomorrow, where would you wet your paddle?

Fowlkes: Locally the Chattooga, Ocoee and Nolichucky. Western rivers the Selway and Middle Fork Salmon.

ACA: Favorite boat? Canoe, Kayak, SUP, Raft...

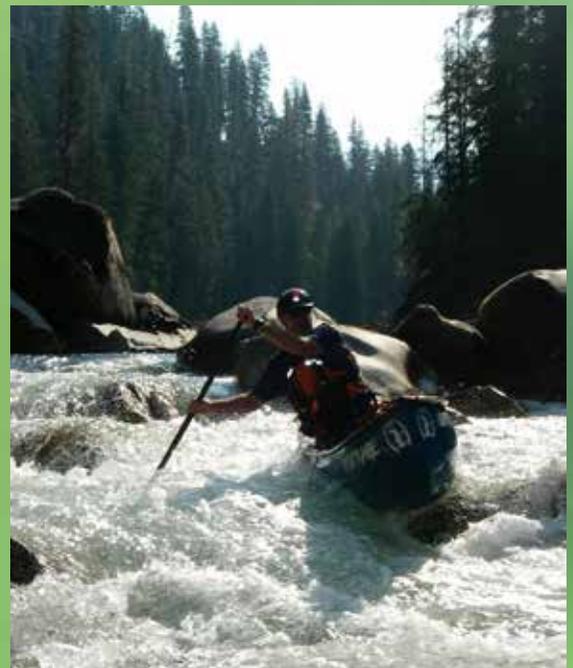
Fowlkes: Mad River Outrage and Ocoee solo canoes, Bounce 11 SUP, 14 NRS Otter inflatable oar rig and Esquif Pocket Canyon tandem canoe.

ACA: When you're not teaching or paddling on the water, what other activities/hobbies do you enjoy?

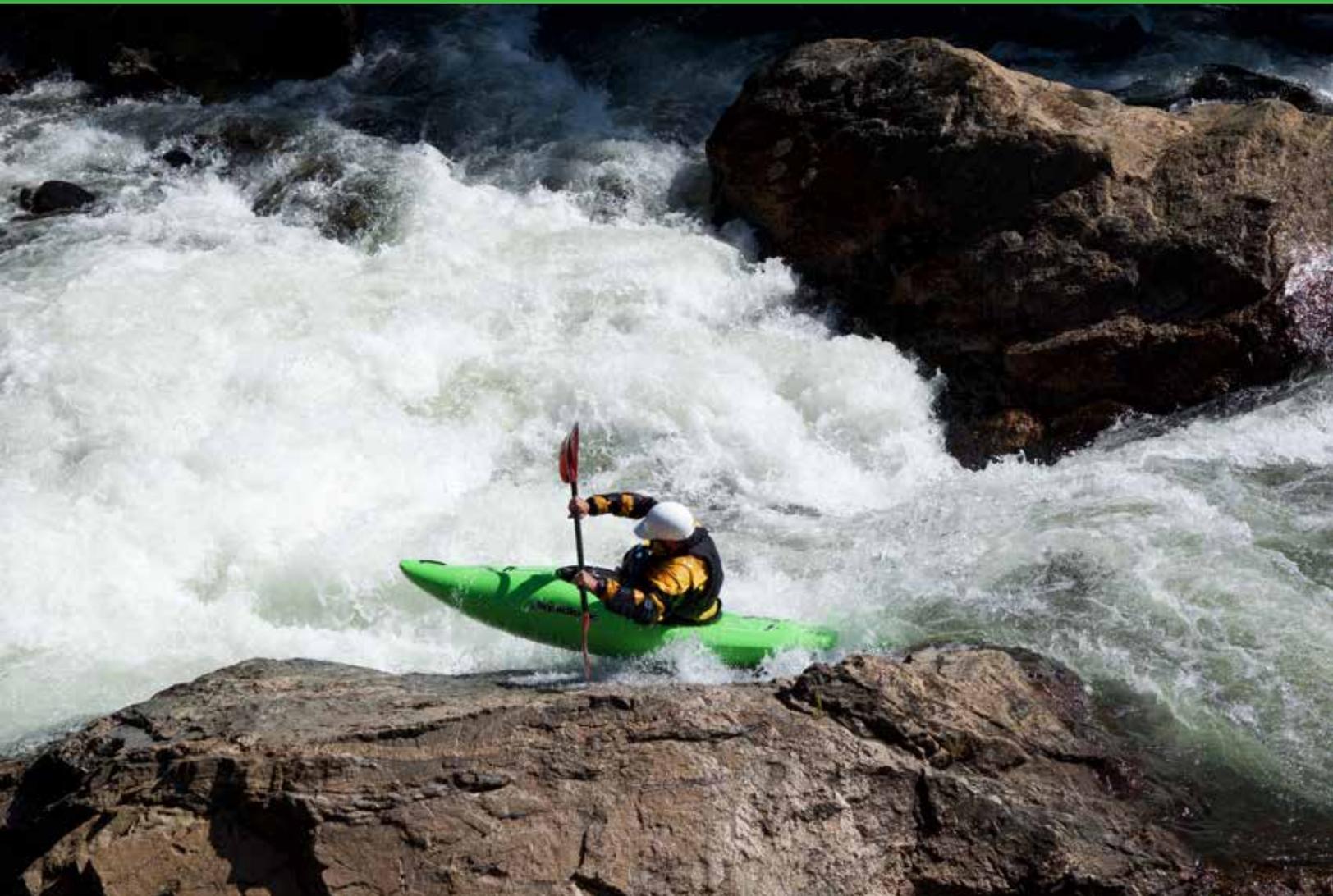
Fowlkes: Playing acoustic and electric guitar and mandolin. Following Greensky Bluegrass our family band. Snow skiing, biking, hiking. Watching our four grandkids grow up and learn to paddle.

ACA: Do you have any additional statements or comments you would like to make?

Fowlkes: Paddlesport is a family activity, get outside and appreciate nature as you gain skills and experience. Our family combined to produce an article for *Paddler* magazine (Sept/Oct 2008) where son Jason was the canoeist, daughter LeAnne was the photographer and I was the author. I couldn't have persevered for 40 years without the support of friends and family especially my wife Marie. I'm humbled, to say the least.



*Making the World a Better Place to Paddle!
Since 1880.*



www.americancanoe.org

