



# Journal of Paddlesport Education

A professional forum highlighting Safety Education & Instruction for ACA Instructors, Clubs & Affiliates



December 2013

Welcome to the Journal of Paddlesport Education.



This Issue:

Certification Testimonial [pg 1](#)

Kokatat Instructor [pg 2](#)

SEI Department Update [Pg 4](#)

Become a Subaru VIP! [Pg 5](#)

## Notes from the Field: Instructor Certification

By April Zilg

Two years ago, I first heard that the ACA (American Canoe Association) 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 (it would appear) 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.

*Lead article continued on p. 6*



The ACA National Office is moving!

We are staying in historic downtown Fredericksburg, Virginia but will have a new mailing address.

Check [www.americancanoe.org](http://www.americancanoe.org) for the latest information!



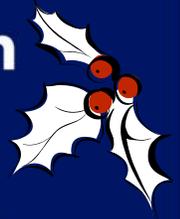
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## ACA Instructors, please report your courses!

The SEI Department derives great value from knowing about the courses that YOU teach, and the students that you reach on behalf of ACA.

Even if you did not use ACA insurance, register the course beforehand, or if the course was a private or small class, we want to hear about it!

Take a few minutes to utilize our [EZ Skills](#) Online reporting system—it is simple, fast, and appreciated!



## Kokatat Instructor of the Month December: Dan Cox of Auburndale, MA

Dan has been paddling for the past 15 years, and began ‘messaging about in canoes’ when he was young. After being inspired by video footage of rafts on the Zambezi River, and after watching whitewater paddling in the Olympics, Dan was hooked on kayaking. After high school, Dan was not satisfied with the ‘normal’ day jobs commonly available and decided to pursue becoming an ACA certified kayak instructor so he could share his paddling passions with others.

Dan’s favorite place to paddle is the coast of Maine because it has endless spots to explore. In 2010, Dan completed one of his life-long dreams of paddling from Canada to Key West—the entire east coast! One other memorable moment for Dan was paddling in Cape Lookout, North Carolina with his then future wife, Bethany. It was the middle of the night, and the water was alight with bioluminescence. They took several hours to paddle across the sound to absorb the incredible beauty of the water. Dan is most proud of the individuals that he has had the opportunity to teach; he is always glad to see their excitement and



skills develop, knowing that they will carry the sport with them forever. The ACA would like to say CONGRATULATIONS to Dan!

To read more about our past instructors of the month, or to nominate a great instructor, please see the [Kokatat Instructor of the Month Page](#).

The ACA would like to extend a big THANKS to [Kokatat](#) for sponsoring our Instructor of the Month Program!

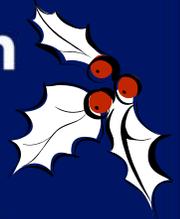
**Kokatat**<sup>®</sup>  
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## New ACA Liability Waivers!



Along with the usual membership renewal options, the ACA Waiver & Release of Liability form now allows for new or renewing members to indicate their choice of Rapid Media Magazine subscriptions.

Starting in January 2014, the old 2012 ACA Waivers will no longer be accepted by the ACA National Office.

Paper waivers not for you? Try our new online waivers!

## Shop at AmazonSmile

and Amazon will make a donation to:  
American Canoe Association

Get started



Just in time for your holiday shopping!

Shop through Amazon's new charitable site, AmazonSmile, and the online retailer will donate 0.5% of the price of your purchase to the ACA.

<https://smile.amazon.com/ch/84-0619411>

ACA members, don't forget to take advantage of the exclusive member prices offered by the ACA's official sunglass partner, Hobie Polarized.

Visit the Hobie Polarized Pro website (<http://hobie.promotive.com/>), enter your email address and use the ACA code: HPACA to receive a 50-60% discount off your next pair of polarized sunglasses!



You can also give the gift of a charitable donation to the nation's oldest paddlesport association—click here to find out more about how you can help make the world a better place to paddle—today!



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## SEI UPDATE

2013

### Instructor Audit

If your ACA instructor certification expires this year on 12/31/2013, and if you have questions regarding your certification, please contact the SEI Department at [sei@americancanoe.org](mailto:sei@americancanoe.org)



## SEI Department Update

SEIC Policy Manual Change—As of the September SEIC Meeting

ITs upgrading within a discipline or ITs attempting to certify in a subsequent discipline must lead an IDW/ICE at the new level or in the new discipline under the direct supervision of a mentoring ITE. ITs are eligible to conduct this lead teach provided they are already an appropriately certified ACA Instructor at the level of the lead teach, and have taught and properly reported at least two skills courses at the desired level in lieu of the two year minimum requirement (Chapter 3.B.2.a.).

Find the SEIC Policy Manual in its entirety, [here](#).

Save the Date!

The next SEIC Meeting will be held on February 21st in Columbus, GA.

Find more information, [here](#).

**SEIC MEETING**

ACA Instructors!

Join the ACA's Promotive.com Team!

Promotive.com is an online marketplace for outdoor industry professionals who have significant sales influence in their personal and professional communities. Thanks to ACA's knowledge and influence in the paddling community, ACA INSTRUCTORS are invited to become a member of the ACA - Promotive.com team! The ACA team has access to discounts on over 300 outdoor brands including Yakima, Big Agnes, Marmot, Old Town, Necky Kayaks, Gregory, and so many more! Benefits include:

- Up to 70% off retail prices
- Membership to the team is free
- New products and brands are added every day

Visit our team page at [www.promotive.com/aca](http://www.promotive.com/aca)



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## SHARE YOUR PHOTOS



## Become a Subaru VIP

The American Canoe Association is proud to count Subaru of America among its corporate sponsors.

Subaru is the official vehicle of the ACA.

As part of Subaru's support for the association, ACA members are eligible to participate in the Subaru VIP Partners Program. VIP Partners participants can save up to \$3,300\* off the manufacturer's suggested retail price (depending on model and equipment selected) on the purchase or lease of any new Subaru from participating dealers. This discount is available to all eligible ACA members. No haggling is required.

Now that's a member benefit!

In addition to providing discounts to ACA members, Subaru is partnering with *your* ACA to support the ACA's stewardship and conservation programs. When an ACA member purchases a vehicle through the VIP Partners Program, Subaru makes a contribution to support ACA's stewardship work, providing the organization with much-needed resources for protecting our nation's waterways.

To learn more about the VIP Program visit: [www.americancanoe.org/VIP](http://www.americancanoe.org/VIP)

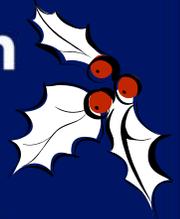


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***'Notes from the Field: Instructor Certification—By April Zilg'*** continued from p. 1

Many times as an instructor, you'll have a student that isn't understanding something, and no matter how hard you try, "Drop your top arm, straighten you 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 to a more advanced stroke. 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. Something they have is years of experience. The ACA and ACA instructors have been brought to court in the past for other paddle-sport related incidents. Every time, they've come out fine. Instructors earning 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.

## **Our Experience**

Corey and I signed up for levels 1 and 2 for a three-day weekend, and then we went back to the US National Whitewater Center for a two-day level 3. Level 1 and 2 covered a lot of technical knowledge, how to instruct, and the necessary skill set. It was a long three days! We had to break down all of our paddle strokes into display-quality maneuvers, which was definitely the hardest part for me. In the end we earned our titles as Level 2 Instructors. When we went back for the level 3 course, we were running rapids, practicing rescues, and working on displaying skills in moving water. Even though our performance and teaching skills were sufficient, our technical knowledge of the river needed work. We've been assigned some homework before we can earn level 3. It's a certification we're both looking forward to having.



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**SUBARU**



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There will always be some amount of individual variation when people sign up for SUP lessons. Each instructor will be different. There may be some with no formal training that give amazing lessons; alternatively, there may be some with world-class training that give awful lessons. Either way, it doesn't hurt to have a GREAT foundation. You can also always get better; you can always learn something new. I know that I learned new ways to explain skills, to help some people learn slower, to help some learn faster, and some new tricks for myself. Just yesterday while surfing I used one of my new skills, the "high brace," to prevent a fall. It worked.



For more information from April, please visit her original [blog post](#).

Want to see first-hand what an ACA certification course is all about?  
Visit our [website for instructors](#), or contact our SEI Department at [sei@americancanoe.org](mailto:sei@americancanoe.org)

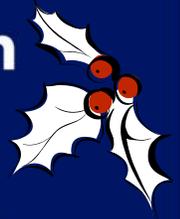


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## Submit an Article

Want to submit an article and be featured in the ACA Journal of Paddlesport Education?

Learn more at [www.americancanoe.org/JournalofPaddlesportEducation](http://www.americancanoe.org/JournalofPaddlesportEducation)

Submit articles to [www.americancanoe.org/JPE/submission](http://www.americancanoe.org/JPE/submission)



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