

ACA Board Application

Anna Levesque

1) Why are you interested in serving on ACA's Board?

I'm interested in serving on ACA's Board because I'm interested in making a difference in the ACA itself, and in the ACA's ability to positively impact the diversity, safety, joy and growth of paddlesports.

Specifically, I'm interested in supporting and challenging the ACA to become a more sustainable, profitable and diverse organization that provides a compelling vision and benefits to members to help grow membership, create a community that is excited about the work of the ACA, strengthens the organization and enhances the positive impact the ACA has on and in the paddlesports community.

2) What specific knowledge, skills, abilities and talents will you bring?

I bring 27 years of knowledge of, and experience within the paddling industry as a pro sponsored athlete, raft guide, video kayaker, instructor, instructor trainer, instructor trainer educator, ACA committee chair, fundraiser, event organizer and entrepreneur.

My skills, abilities and talents (in my opinion talents are skills that you've practiced) include:

- Fundraising
- Event organizing
- Social media marketing knowledge and experience
- Website and marketing copywriting.
- Marketing and sales.
- Generating revenue by increasing the value offered to customers.
- Effective communication and feedback in challenging situations.
- Leadership skills that include powerful listening, self-awareness, effective communication and integrity. And, the courage to hold myself and others accountable for their actions.
- Excellent whitewater kayaking and SUP skills and teaching ability.
- Mentorship.
- Ability to help develop a strong vision for an organization and setting up the structures to support follow-through and meet goals.
- The ability to be comfortable with discomfort.

3) What do you believe are the most important challenges facing ACA at this time?

It occurs for me that the most important challenges facing the ACA at this time are financial sustainability, resistance to change/lack of accountability and lack of vision.

4) How would you address those challenges?

Financial Sustainability

- I would initiate a brainstorming session with stakeholders about how to move away from membership dues being the only source of revenue for the ACA.
- I support the ACA in hiring a fundraising/sponsorship full time staff position to increase revenue, and therefore increase programs and benefits for members.
- When it comes to increasing membership, brainstorm ways that the ACA could provide greater value to members.

Resistance to Change/Lack of accountability

- The ACA needs a clear vision to move us forward. It's going to take courage and moving away from statements that I've heard like 'this is way we've always done it,' or 'the ACA is a volunteer organization this is the way it is and we can't do anything about it,' or instructor trainers not wanting things to change because 'that will affect my bottom line.' So, I would address this by creating a safe space to have challenging conversations with stakeholders about how the ACA can change and what vision we want for the future.
- It's imperative that we start taking steps toward diversity, equity and inclusion within the ACA because that will make the organization and paddlesports stronger, more effective, more sustainable, more inclusive and more fun. Currently, as a member of the ACA DEI Board Committee, I'm advocating for DEI training for ACA board members, staff, SEIC members and State Directors so that we can become more self-aware, understand the impacts of our actions, get on the same page using the same language and create change together.
- Holding space for conversations where all stakeholders listen with the goal of understanding and are also heard. When everyone feels heard it's easier to work toward change and a common goal.
- Work on systems to hold staff, volunteers and Instructors/ITs/ITEs accountable for following the ACA code of conduct, policies and for modeling what we we say our mission is.

Lack of Vision

- As I'm filling out this application I went to the ACA website to find the mission statement and vision, but couldn't find it. I'd like to see our Why be communicated prominently both on the website and within the organization. It's not enough to have it written somewhere obscure. How are we modeling that vision as staff and volunteers to benefit members, stewardship, instruction and competition? This is a conversation I would initiate and take action based on feedback and ideas.
- When the time comes to hire a new ED I advocate for hiring someone who can fulfill on the organization's vision with creativity, new ideas and follow through. I advocate for someone who has strong leadership skills in creating effective and positive culture within an organization and who challenges it to be better and more sustainable.

5) Do you have any previous experience serving on a non-profit Board? Are you currently serving on a Board?

I served on the Board of the Friends of Hominy Creek Greenway in Asheville, NC for 6 years.

I currently serve on the Advisory Board for Western Carolina University's Parks and Recreation department.

I currently serve on the ACA DEI Board.

6) What do you expect from the ACA to make service on the Board personally rewarding for you?

I expect stakeholders to listen to and consider my ideas with authenticity and courage, and be willing to take action toward change knowing that it won't be comfortable. So, I suppose, I expect other members of the board, the ED, staff and SEIC members to be willing to get comfortable with discomfort for the benefit of the organization as a whole and its membership.

7) Have you reviewed the job description? Are you willing to make a commitment to the listed obligations, including time, work and financial contributions?

Yes

Anna Levesque

Entrepreneur | Paddle Educator | Health Coach | Author | Speaker

EXPERIENCE/CERTIFICATIONS

Girls at Play dba Mind Body Paddle, Asheville, NC — Owner

2004 - PRESENT

Running a business that empowers women in mind, body and adventure since 2004.

Certifications

- L4 American Canoe Association (ACA) Whitewater Kayak Instructor Trainer Educator
- L5 ACA whitewater kayak instructor
- L2 ACA SUP Instructor Trainer Educator
- ACA SUP Yoga Endorser
- 500 hour certified yoga teacher with Yoga Alliance
- Certified Ayurveda Wellness Coach.

Paddlesports Programming

- ACA L4 Whitewater Kayak and SUP L2 Instructor Certification courses in the US and China 2009 - present.
- Private Instruction 2004 - present.
- Creek Week - the only Class IV creeking class for women in the world. (2009 to present)
- Virtual Whitewater Master Class (2020-2021)
- Womens Paddlefest at NOC (2018 - present)
- Barbados SUP Retreat (2018 - present)
- Costa Rica paddling trips (2011 - present)
- Camp Crystal Kai in NC (2017 to 2018)
- Ladies Southeast Paddling Series (2016 - 2017)
- Ecuador paddling trips (2017 - 2018)
- Beginner Clinics for Women (2004 - 2016)
- Intermediate Clinics for Women (2004 - 2016)
- Mexico paddling trips (2003 - 2010)
- Girls at Play Summer Tour (2004 - 2008)

Health Coaching Programs

- One on one health coaching based in Ayurveda.
- 8 week virtual wellness circles (4X per year).
- Guided group cleanse (2X per year).

AWARDS

ACA Excellence in Instruction Award 2020

Voted 2017 Most Inspirational Outdoors Person of the Year in Blue Ridge Outdoors Magazine

Named one of the 50 most influential paddlers alive by Canoe and Kayak Magazine

Boaterchick of the Year for outstanding service to the whitewater community and women in boating 2009

Bronze medalist at the 2001 Freestyle Kayak World Championships

LANGUAGES

English, French, Spanish

PUBLISHED WRITING

- Yoga for Paddling Book, Falcon Guides (2017) [Click here.](#)
- Former column writer for Kayak Session Magazine
- Have been published on paddling.net, in AW Journal, Rapid Magazine, Canoe and Kayak, Paddling Magazine, Samata Mag and Stand Up Paddling Magazine.

Media Production

- YouTube Channel with 1K + subscribers featuring paddling, mindset, health and yoga instructional videos. [Click here.](#)
- Downloadable Yoga for Paddling Classes on Vimeo
- Yoga for Kayaking DVD (2011)
- Whitewater Kayaking for Women DVD (2010)
- Recreational Kayaking for Women DVD (2007)
- Whitewater Kayaking Basics for Women DVD (2006)
- Girls at Play DVD - the first instructional DVD for women in whitewater kayaking (2004)

Speaker/Guest Instructor

Workshop presenter America Outdoors Conference (December 2021)

Speaker Providence School of Transformative Leadership and Spirituality (2021)

Presenter for Nantahala Outdoor Center Master Guide Class (2019-2021)

SUP Yoga Instructor/speaker for Zejiang University summer programs (2017)

SUP Yoga Teacher Training at Kripalu Center for Health and Wellness (presenter 2018-2019)

Presenter Canoecopia (so many years I can't remember until 2018)

Leader Womens Paddfest at Bearpaw Outdoors for 5 years

Speaker Radford University Outdoor Program (2007)

Speaker St Lawrence University Outdoor Program (2006)

Speaker Bowdoin College Outdoor Program and Womens Studies (2005 and 2009)

Fundraising/Volunteer

- Co-Director of the Shannon Christy Memorial Fund (2017 to present). As co-director I've helped raise over \$30,000 and distribute \$20,000 in grants so far.
- Member of the ACA DEI Board Committee (2021)
- Chair of the ACA SUP Discipline Committee (2019 - present)
- Member of Western Carolina University's Advisory Board to their Parks and Recreation Department.
- Group leader for the Green River Takeover (2014-present)
- Voting Member of the ACA River Kayak Committee (2018-present)
- Volunteered with Soft Power Health on the White Nile in Uganda (2008)

Whitewater Kayak Athlete

1999 - 2004

- 5-time member of the Canadian Freestyle Kayak Team (1999 - 2003)
- Bronze medalist at 2001 World Freestyle Championships. (2001)
- Consistent top 3 finishes in both freestyle kayak and extreme race competitions between 1999-2003. Trained/paddled/competed around the world - Australia, Austria, New Zealand, Spain, Uganda, US and Canada.

Raft Guide/Kayak Instructor

1997 - 2001

Raft guide and kayak instructor in West Virginia, Canada, Mexico, Ecuador and New Zealand.

EDUCATION

University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill — *Bachelor of Arts with Honors in International Studies with an area concentration of Latin America and a focus on Political Science. 1992-1996*