

WHY TAKE WOOD BADGE? TURN TO P. 30

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MARCH-APRIL 2014

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A New Sea Scout  
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EXPLORE



# Making Waves

How the new **SEA SCOUT BASE-GALVESTON** changes Scouting's course.

BY MARK HENRICKS

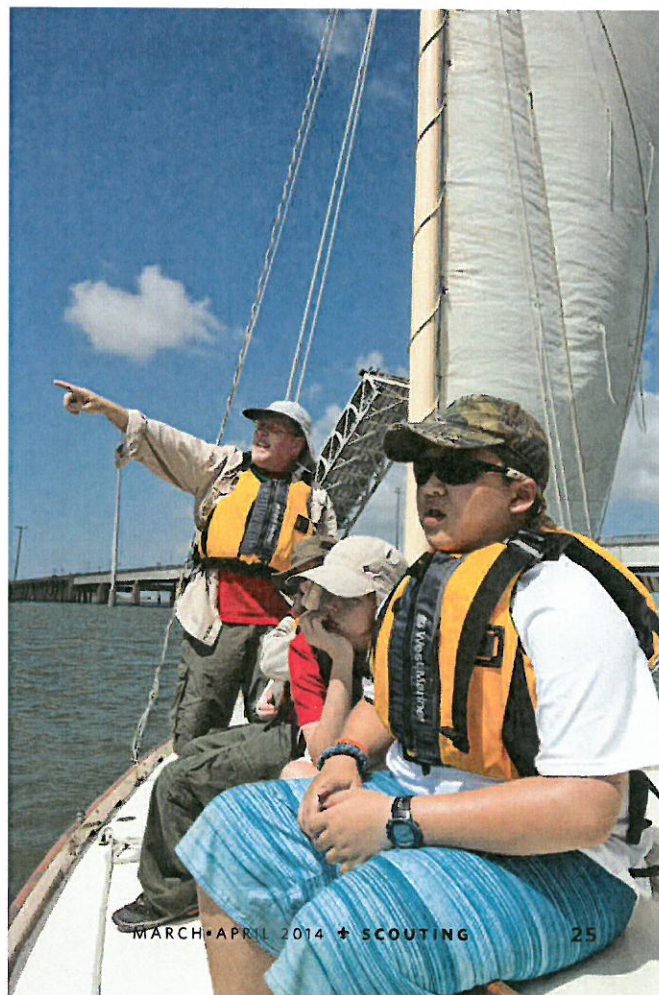
PHOTOGRAPHS BY W. GARTH DOWLING

ONE DAY IN 2007, Bay Area Council Scout Executive Chuck Herrera's office called him to say a man had come by to talk about Sea Base Galveston. At that point, the base was little more than a vision Herrera had for facilities and programs to put Scouts in boats on the waters in and around Galveston Bay. It took Herrera most of an hour to get back to the office, but the visitor, Charles Doolin, waited, and the two struck up a conversation that lasted three hours.

From that beginning sprang Sea Scout Base-Galveston, a complex anchored by a five-story, 60,000-square-foot building with lodging, a cafeteria, classrooms and offices now rising on the shores of Offatts Bayou on Galveston's landward side. When complete this year, it will include an outdoor chapel shaped like a ship, a pool big enough for swimming tests and scuba certification, dock spaces for a sizable fleet of sail and powerboats, and other needs for hosting 200 to 300 Scouts on seaborne adventures up to a week or longer.

Among the features of Sea Scout Base-Galveston is an environmentally friendly design that aims to earn the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design

All Scouts need is a morning of instruction on the water before they're ready to race one another up and down Offatts Bayou at Sea Scout Base-Galveston in Texas. Sailing into Galveston's shipping harbor on the Tom Foolery (right), Troop 55 Assistant Scoutmaster Tom Whiteside draws Scouts' attention to oceangoing freighters and an offshore drilling platform.





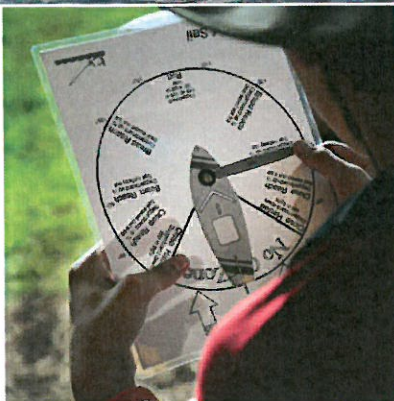
Robbie Frazee of Troop 325 (this page, left) sets the jib as his small crew learns to sail a racing boat. Back on land, Scouts and leaders (above) break into teams for hands-on learning about sails and boats. To practice sailing techniques, Scouts use technology old and new, including wind diagrams and knot-tying iPad apps. In-person instruction is still the best, though, as Chelsie Bilger (opposite page, top) proves during a sail-rigging demo with Scouts Robert Aycock and Frazee. Sea Scout Base staffers Devon Carter (opposite page, top right), Program Commissioner Alex Freas (opposite page, middle) and Capt. Scott Harrison (opposite page, bottom) give participants the needed time and attention.

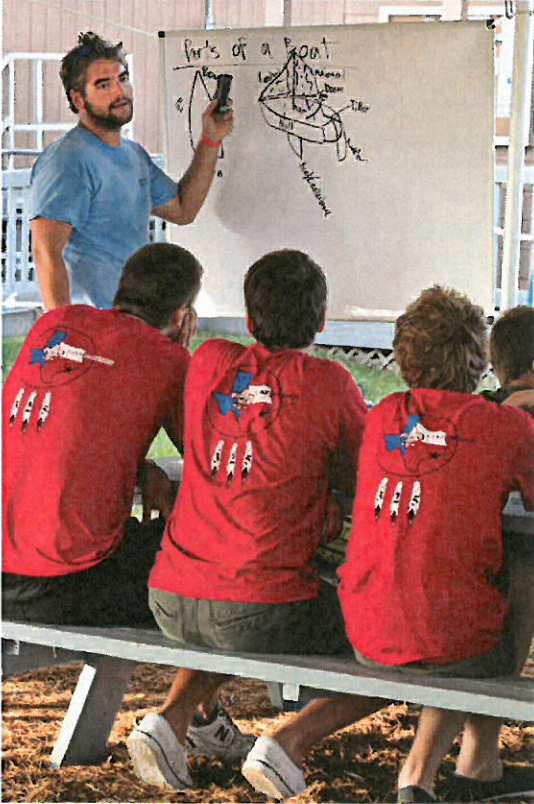
Platinum certification, the highest for green buildings. Programs include kayaking, small- and large-boat sailing and powerboating for Boy Scouts, Venturers and Sea Scouts, plus maritime education for mature Scouts and interns presented in a 110-foot, two-story floating classroom ship called the BaySmart Express.

With an estimated total financial investment, including construction, boats and operating endowment, approaching \$100 million, Sea Scout Base-Galveston rivals almost any Scout facility. "It is a tremendous project, and it is going to make a big splash in the high-adventure community," Herrera says.

**ONE OF THE BASE'S** most striking features is the extent to which it is the product of the vision and resources of one couple. Charles and Rosemary Doolin became involved in Scouting in 2002 when their son joined a Sea Scout ship near their Dallas home. Charles soon became deeply immersed in boating, ultimately earning a master's license from the U.S. Coast Guard for vessels up to 100 tons or around 90 feet long.

With their Sea Scout Ship 77 leaders and youth, the Doolins began acquiring a number of boats and hosting Sea Scouts on a variety of sailing expeditions. In 2006, they bought an 82-foot former Coast Guard cutter, the Point Glass, in Galveston. After purchasing the vessel, the Doolins searched for a deep-water base from which to launch adventure trips aboard Point Glass. A dock launch was purchased in Offatts Bayou, but Hurricane Ike thwarted construction of a pier. Not long after, Charles contacted Herrera, and plans for





what would become the Sea Scout base began to take shape.

First, however, Herrera and the Bay Area Council had to expand the notion of what the facility could be. The initial idea for a sea base amounted to little more than a dock, a metal boat-storage building and an open space for tents. At one of the first meetings, however, Charles pulled out concept drawings for a much larger, three-story building beside Offatts Bayou. “I said, ‘Holy smokes! This is beyond what I’m thinking,’” Herrera says.

During dozens of subsequent design meetings, they realized the pool had to be bigger to accommodate swimming tests. The main building expanded to house more Scouts and staff. Parking was a recurring problem, thanks to municipal regulations on minimum numbers of spaces.

But luck and the Doolins’ unwavering support remained on their side. They acquired a secondhand fleet of small Sonar sailboats — perfect for Scouts and even disabled sailors. A fleet of small racing boats, FJs, was also added to the base. Doolin then purchased the BaySmart Express, which was already being used as a seagoing classroom by a Houston nonprofit. The capacity to educate and engage youth in maritime activities grew with the resources acquired by the Doolins. Even Hurricane Ike, which devastated Galveston in 2008, couldn’t derail it.

**THIS IS NOT TO SAY** the course to the sea base was traveled hastily or without many direction changes. Early plans, for instance, called for a walkway over the

nearby interstate highway connecting to parking. That became unnecessary when a better land parcel was acquired.

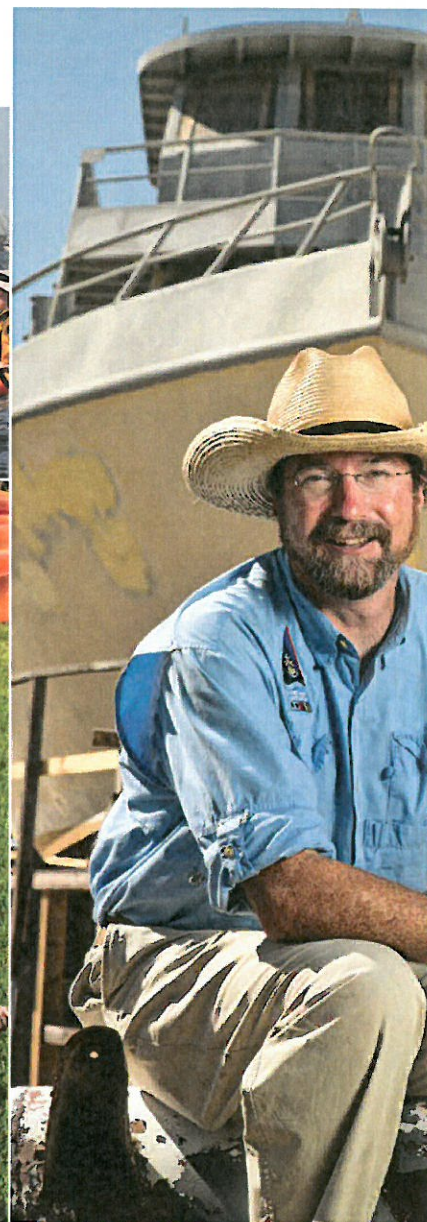
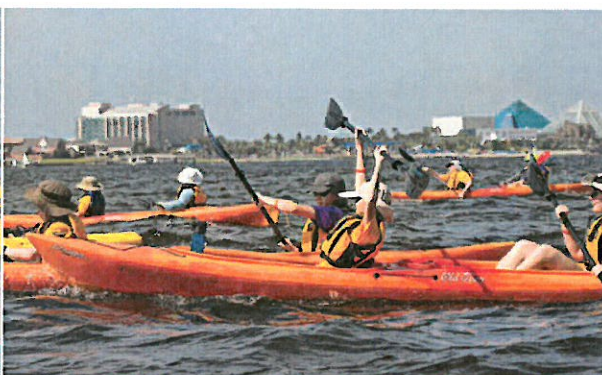
The ultimate vision has never wavered: to provide a place where Scouts and leaders can learn about the sea and boats and, in particular, to provide a home for Sea Scouts. The Sea Scout connection was critical for the Doolins. It was more important for Charles to name it Sea Scout Base-Galveston — not Galveston Sea Base, for instance — than for his name to appear anywhere on the property. Charles and Rosemary want to support Sea Scouts, but they don’t want it to be called “Doolin Sea Base.” The Doolins want the base’s name to emphasize the marine nature of the facility for Scouts and future seafarers.

Despite the close Sea Scout connection, the facility will actually host at least three different programs, only one of them Scout-oriented and supported. The BaySmart program will provide educational programs for schoolkids as well as Cub Scouts, and the floating classroom will serve as a training platform for maritime students working toward their Merchant Mariner credentials. And the Galveston Community Youth Sailing Center, a franchise of US Sailing, will use the facility to teach sailing to the public with a special emphasis on adaptive programs for the disabled.

The memory of the recent hurricane was a key consideration during the



**TAKE A VIDEO TOUR** of Sea Scout Base-Galveston at [scoutingmagazine.org/galveston](http://scoutingmagazine.org/galveston).



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**FLORIDA SEA BASE**  
305-664-4173; [bsaseabase.org](http://bsaseabase.org)

**CHIEF SEATTLE COUNCIL  
SEA SCOUT FLEET BASE**  
206-920-7685; [seattlebsa.org/  
Main-Website-Content/Sea-Scouts](http://seattlebsa.org/Main-Website-Content/Sea-Scouts)

**BAYPORT SCOUT RESERVATION,  
Jamaica, Va.**  
Chesapeake Bay High Adventure  
Sailing Experience  
757-595-3356; [bayportsr.org](http://bayportsr.org)

**GREAT LAKES SAILING ADVENTURE,  
Mackinaw City, Mich.**  
Michigan Crossroads Council  
[michiganscouting.org/camping/great-lakessailingadventure](http://michiganscouting.org/camping/great-lakessailingadventure)

**TACOMA SEA SCOUT BASE,  
Tacoma, Wash.**  
253-572-2666; [youthmarinefoundation.org](http://youthmarinefoundation.org)

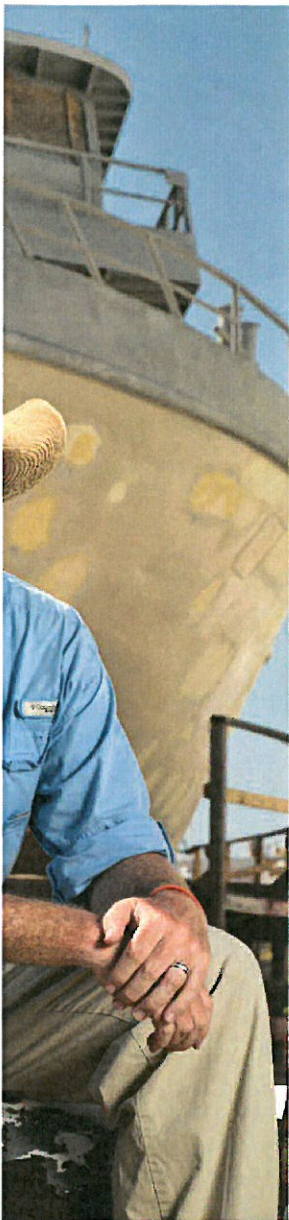


construction of the base. The floating docks attach to 18-foot pylons, well above the surge experienced during the last big storm. Residents in Galveston have a strong respect for the forces of nature.

It's that respect for nature that drove Doolin to construct a large warehouse, boat storage and maintenance facility several miles inland in the town of Hitchcock. It's here that the base can repair, maintain and, should bad weather require it, relocate boats to safety. The Hitchcock facility includes a spacious sail loft, complete with bolts of fabric and six sewing machines. And who operates the sewing machines, fixing and fabricating sails, as well as refurbishing tillers? None other than Capt. Doolin.

If the idea that the primary financial benefactor of a massive project like Sea Scout Base-Galveston would also labor long hours patching sails seems strange, that's because there aren't many like the Doolins. Charles is a man of exceptionally few words, but Rosemary provides any missing verbalization required. Both are deeply religious, committed to Scouting, especially Sea Scouting, and absolutely unafraid of getting their hands dirty.

Eric Steele, program development and properties director for the council, estimates the Doolins are at the Sea Scout base 60 hours a week, and they are there to work. Until recently, Rosemary did the cooking and delivered the many bags of ice



Before dipping their paddles — and, when things go awry, their whole bodies — into Galveston's Offatts Bayou, Scouts try kayaking techniques on the shore (opposite page). Kayaking's one of several ways Scouts can enjoy the water at Sea Scout Base-Galveston. Program Director Rob Cliff's most excited about the total renovation of the base's new BaySmart Express, a state-of-the-art, 110-foot oceangoing classroom that can accommodate up to 100 students at a time. Other features at the base include a five-story, 60,000-square-foot environmentally friendly building with lodging, classrooms, offices and a cafeteria ready this year. The Point Glass (examined by executive director Ed Carrette, below) is the base's 82-foot former U.S. Coast Guard cutter, and it'll soon be shipshape and ready, too.



required to keep food fresh in the fleet's onboard coolers. Charles is usually on a boat with Scouts, although he will tackle any task at hand, up to and including cleaning oily engine rooms. "There's a different level of commitment," Steele says.

**THE OUTCOME OF THEIR** commitment made its tangible presence felt for the first time in the summer of 2011, when the initial Scouts arrived for weeklong summer programs. Crews of six Scouts participated in kayaking, small- and large-boat sailing, and power boating on the waters of Offatts Bayou and portions of the nearby Gulf Intracoastal Waterway.

The \$3,000-per-crew cost of the program hasn't been a problem, Steele says. They've drawn Scouts from Louisiana and Dallas in addition to Galveston and Houston for the first set of week-long adventures. And they've received inquiries from as far as St. Louis. For the moment, however, most potential visitors are waiting until the facility fully opens this summer.

In spite of the potentially national draw, Steele says he doesn't see Sea Scout Base-Galveston competing with Florida Sea Base. He says they complement each other, with the blue Florida water providing matchless snorkeling and diving, while Galveston emphasizes sailing instruction, seamanship and navigation skills, as well as an array of vessels from kayaks to 40-plus-foot schooners.

In the future, Scouts may sail on the bigger vessels from Galveston to as far as the Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary, 70 miles off the Texas coast, where the Gulf of Mexico's shallow bottom allows coral reefs to flourish.

Meanwhile, Steele says he's working to build Sea Scout traditions in a brand-new place that, to every appearance, will be around more than long enough to develop its own traditions organically. And watching over it all are the Doolins, working, providing support and energizing the vision of a world-class sea base.

The mission and vision of the Doolins continues to be that Sea Scout Base-Galveston serves as a high-adventure marine and maritime destination — with aquatic programs aimed at educating and fostering independence of body, mind and spirit, while instilling lifetime leadership and team-building skills. Herrera adds, "The bottom line is to serve youth, and the tool we'll use is Sea Scout Base-Galveston." ♣

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