

East Boston

TIMES - FREE PRESS

John Lynds | August 11, 2021

NOAH's Constitution Beach Kayaking Program a Success So Far

Last summer the COVID 19 pandemic cancelled one of East Boston beloved summertime activities.

For several years now the East Boston Neighborhood of Affordable Housing (NOAH) has run a widely successful free kayaking program at Constitution Beach. With the exception of last summer, residents could head down to the beach from July to the end of August, sign out a kayak, get some simple instruction from N-YO (NOAH Youth) and be off paddling around the waters between the beach and Logan Airport as part of the Learn to Kayak and Boat Safety program.

Melinda Vega, NOAH's Community Building and Environment Coordinator, said as COVID-19 restrictions began to lift, NOAH was eager to resume in-person summer programming when it was safe to do so and July saw the return of Learn to Kayak and Boat Safety sessions at Constitution Beach.

"It's going really well," said Vega. "We've been getting a lot of visitors throughout the summer so far. It has become one of our most popular activities in the summer."

The kayaking program runs Thursday through Sunday from 11 am to 5 pm.

"Last year with COVID there was obviously no safe way to run the program," said Vega. "But this year we are up and running and partnering with a couple other organizations. We were part of the Save the Harbor/Save the Bay's Beach Day, the EBNHC's Let's Get Movin program and the youth they serve came down a few times. So it's been busy, not as busy as year's past but you can tell that there is a need in the community for this program and it's something that the community looks forward to."

Vega said on average 100 to 150 have been signing out kayaks on the weekends at Eastie's only beach with about 30 to 50 people on slower days.

"We will also take part in Eastie Pride Day on Aug. 21 and our youth will be available to help residents learn to kayak or kayak on their own," she said.

Children ages 10 to 14 may kayak alone if accompanied on the water by an adult in another kayak. Children

under age 10 may paddle if accompanied on a boat by a parent or legal guardian.

At its peak just before the pandemic, NOAH's kayaking program served over 3,000 participants. Kayaking is so easy to do that just about anybody can handle it. NOAH uses very stable and comfortable sit-on-top ocean kayaks, so people don't feel confined by the boats. It literally takes no time for novice kayakers to get the hang of it on these boats.

NOAH's kayaking program is made possible by a Save the Harbor Save the Bay Better Beaches Grant as well as support from the American Canoe Association and the Department of Conservation and Recreation.