



## Gray Fox provides practical experience for sea cadets while in Bay City

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Petty Officer 3rd Class Amy Abel, 11, of Three Rivers, steers the Gray Fox along the Saginaw River.

BAY CITY — More than a dozen young sea cadets are getting valuable maritime and teamwork experience this week in Bay City.

The Gray Fox, a former Naval vessel now used as a training ship by the U.S. Naval Sea Cadet Corps, is in Bay City as guest of the Saginaw Valley Naval Ship Museum and has taken aboard 14 boys and three girls from across the state.

The sea cadets will spend the week as crew of the 120-foot-long ship.

“It’s an awesome program,” Gray Fox Capt. Bill Barnhardt said. “The kids get to be part of a team. The most important thing it gives kids is self confidence.”

Bradley Miles, a 16-year-old cadet from Muskegon, said he has enjoyed his stay on the Gray Fox thus far.

“It’s my first time on the Gray Fox,” he said. “It’s fun, but you have to put some work into it. There are watch stations where you have to call in other ships, and manning the helm, which is tough because you have to steer the ship while staying on course with all your navigation gear.”

Miles is a seaman apprentice and plans to join the Navy.

"I'm hoping to improve my seamanship with this and get better skills for the road to the military," he said.

With some adult supervision, cadets take charge of the entire ship from steering to managing — like Logan Jennings, 13, of Sand Lake.

"I work with the engines," he said. "I go down below the decks and check the gauges."

Jennings said he's leaning towards joining the Army but wants to learn different things through the sea cadets and the Gray Fox.

Petty Officer 3rd Class Amy Abel, an 11-year-old Three Rivers native, has her future planned out already and thinks being a sea cadet will help.

"I plan to be a dentist, so I'm going to go into the (Navy's) Dental Corps," she said.

Abel said being a cadet has big advantages.

"Probably the best part is you get to do things regular kids at school don't," she said.

The Gray Fox is staffed by three adult officers other than its captain, all of whom volunteer.

The ship is available for free public tours generally in the midafternoon when it is at the dock in Wenonah Park.

The Saginaw Valley Naval Ship Museum and the Gray Fox are members of the Navy League, a nonprofit organization dedicated to educating Americans about the importance of sea power to U.S. national security and supporting the men and women of the sea services and their families.

The Gray Fox was built in 1985 and originally served as a torpedo-recovery ship for the U.S. Navy. Since 1998 it has served as a vessel for shipboard training for sea cadets.

The ship will dock in Bay City until July 4.

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