



Naval Sea Cadet Ship Grayfox returning to Bay City this weekend for annual visit

Published: Thursday, June 28, 2012, 8:45 AM Updated: Thursday, June 28, 2012, 8:56 AM



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In this photo from 2011, the United States Naval Sea Cadet Ship Grayfox sits moored at Wenonah Park in Bay City.

BAY CITY, MI —Come Sunday, the U.S. Naval Sea Cadet Ship Grayfox is going to be moored once again at Wenonah Park in downtown Bay City.

"When the cadets arrive for training on Friday, they are 25 different kids from all over the United States," said Lieutenant Commander Bill Barnhardt. "By the time we get to Bay City there is a complete crew — it's phenomenal."

The goal of the Naval Sea Cadet Corps is to help young men and women gain skills in basic seamanship. The crew performs all ship operations under the supervision of volunteer Sea Cadet officers and civilian instructors.

The cadets arrive in Port Huron where the Grayfox is moored on Friday. Barnhardt said that the cadets receive maritime training and sleep on the ship before it departs for Bay City under operation of the crew on Sunday.

"They learn every single job," Barnhardt said. "They run the engines, cook the meals, navigate, steer the ship, learn damage control and any job it takes to run the ship."

Ten instructors in addition to Barnhardt teach the skills to the young crew. Barnhardt said it is up to the cadets to get the ship to Bay City.

"I just sit in the captain's chair, drink coffee and give orders," Barnhardt said. "How many students can return to school and say they drove a 200-ton boat on their summer vacation?"

The trip from Port Huron to Bay City takes around 12 hours. The weather forecast looks optimal, and Barnhardt expects the Grayfox to arrive in Bay City's Wenonah Park between 7 and 7:30 p.m.

While anchored here, the Grayfox crew — made up in part of Naval Sea Cadets ages 14-18 and Navy League Cadets

ages 11-13 — is offering tours to the public and two-hour cruises to underprivileged youth and various organizations, said Mike Kegley, president of the Saginaw Valley Naval Ship Museum, which is hosting the visit.

Some of the organizations taking part in the cruises include local Boy Scouts and Cub Scouts, Do-All Inc., New Dimensions, the American Legion, and Amvets.

Kegley said that the public is welcome to come aboard the ship during off hours, typically after 3 p.m. into the evening. Tours are free, but donations are suggested.

At 120 feet long, the Grayfox is the largest Sea Cadet training vessel in the United States. It was built in 1984 and served time in the Caribbean and Hawaii as a recovery vessel during torpedo drills.

The Grayfox has made annual port-of-call visits to Bay City for more than a decade. It is scheduled to leave Bay City on July 8 to return to its home port of Port Huron.

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