



LAKE HAPPENINGS

White Lake Opens Second Life Jacket Loaner Stand

By Dave Hays, President
White Lake Association

White Lake, located in the heart of scenic Western Michigan, has announced the opening of its second Life Jacket Loaner Station.

The White Lake Association (WLA), in partnership with the Sea Tow Foundation, now offers this potential life-saving service at two launch ramps in the 2,571-acre lake. The stations hold life jackets that local boaters may borrow and use, free of charge. Boaters simply return the jacket(s) to the stand after a day of boating.

Available in sizes ranging from infant to Adult XL, these life jackets help to ensure that each of a boat's passengers has access to necessary safety equipment. This is especially crucial for children under 13 years of age, who are required to wear a life jacket at all times while a boat is underway.

In 2017, WLA submitted a grant request to the Sea Tow Foundation for its first loaner station, located at the busy Montague Municipal Boat Launch and Fish Cleaning Station. The grant was approved, and WLA received the permanent stand, weatherproof signage and 48 new USCG-approved life jackets in 2018. Boaters used and appreciated the free program which WLA volunteers regularly monitor and maintain.

A ribbon cutting was held in early August, with representatives from the White Lake Area Chamber of Commerce,

the U.S. Coast Guard, dignitaries from the sister cities of Whitehall and Montague, the media and the WLA attending.

In late 2018, another grant proposal was submitted to the Sea Tow Foundation; and upon approval, the second life jacket loaner station was opened in May at the popular Scenic Drive launch ramp, located near the channel into Lake Michigan.

Isaac Johnson prepares to buckle up his Sea Tow life jacket. He and his brother, Caleb know to wear their life jackets when near the water. Both brothers said the new life jacket loaner station was "pretty cool!"



This sturdy life jacket loaner station, courtesy of the Sea Tow Foundation, contains jackets sized from infant to XL.

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Caleb Johnson, wearing his Sea Tow life jacket, gets ready to reel in the big one from the Montague launch ramp.

What's next? The WLA hopes to see the Sea Tow Life Jacket Loaner Program spread up and down the Western Michigan shoreline.

"The Sea Tow Foundation offers this awesome program, which spans more than 400 locations across the U.S.," said Dave Hays, WLA president. "What lake association and its riparians would not want to embrace such a great benefit? Educating folks on the program is key to expanding it."

For information on the Sea Tow Foundation's Life Jacket Loaner Program, go to Boatingsafety.com and click on this program for all the details.

And for additional information on the very active WLA, visit whitelakeassociation.org. Of special interest is the link to the article on White Lake and the WLA in the spring 2019 issue of *The Michigan Riparian*, as well as WZZM-TV coverage of the first loaner station ribbon cutting.

WLA consists of hundreds of members who promote WLA activities and actions that preserve the natural amenities of the lake, as well as the public trust. In addition to the life jacket loaner stations, WLA conducts ongoing water sample testing; maintains the weather station and video cam at the White River Light Station, partners with the Steelheaders to install and maintain "No Wake" buoys on White Lake and works to make boat launching convenient and safe at several locations. *R.*

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