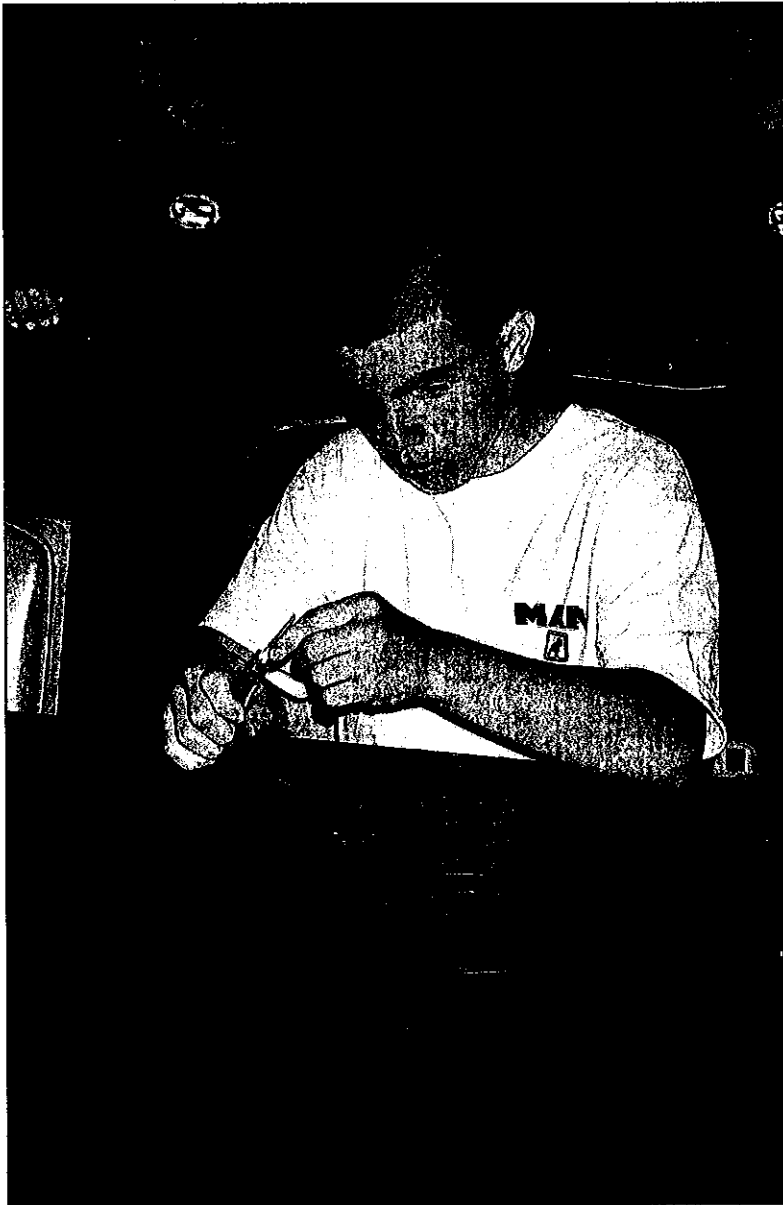


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Hands-on experience for mates



Curtis Malorano, 16, of Tuckerton and other classmates are hard at work during the Junior Mates rig making course offered by instructor Capt. John Koegler. Malorano looks forward to getting out and helping others while making a little money at the same time.

PHOTO COURTESY OF JIM HUTCHINSON

BY JIM HUTCHINSON
Correspondent

Soon after the Beach Haven Charter Fishing Association was formed several years ago, the captains involved all agreed one of their biggest problems as fishing captains was finding qualified mates.

A good mate makes a captain's job much easier and helps insure an enjoyable day on the water for those fishing in the boat. He must be a hard worker, relate well to others and be knowledgeable about fishing.

The Charter Association decided that they would set up a mate's training program and try to recruit young boys and girls who would be interested in going through this program.

The Junior Mates Program is now in its third year, and from all accounts has been a resounding success. The program calls for a training schedule every Thursday evening from late June through August where the mates learn a variety of lessons about fishing, mainly through hands-on activities.

There are two levels of training after which those participants who prove proficiency are awarded a "Charter Boat Mate Certificate" from the association.

This summer there are 12 young men currently undergoing training from the association. Some are in their first year of training while others are at the second level and working toward their certification.

Tom Masterson of Wayne, Pa., a summer resident of Long Beach Island, is in his third year in the mates program. He has already earned his certification and is currently working steadily as a mate. Not content to rest on his laurels, he has begun studies to earn his Captain's license from the U.S. Coast Guard.

Masterson says he has always enjoyed fishing and had toyed with the idea of trying to be a mate.

"I always wanted to do this, but I may not have had the chance if it was not for this training program," he explained at a recent training session.

In addition to the classroom training, all of the prospective mates are assigned to a captain as a sort of apprentice. Initially, all of their work is done at the dock where they perform a variety of prep work prior to the trips and then meet the boat at the end of the day to assist with cleanup.

By the end of the summer, all of the mates should be going out on trips on the water and learning the trade.

Among the many topics studied, the mates study lessons in rigging, trolling patterns, seamanship, throwing a cast net, and others. A local doctor will present a three-hour program in proper first aid techniques.

In addition, as part of becoming a certified mate, all of the students must participate in a Coast Guard approved clean drug testing program. Once these candidates receive their certification, they will be well trained and capable of handling practically every situation on the water.

Curtis Malorano is 16 and a resident of Tuckerton. His passion for fishing gives him the energy to make his way all the way to Beach Haven every Thursday night. Because of the benefits of the class, he has no problem finding a relative willing to drive him all the way to Beach Haven.

"I am enjoying the class and really learning a lot about fishing," says Malorano.

He enjoys getting out and fishing on his own and says he looks forward to helping others while making some money at the same time.

Lindsay Fuller, captain of the "June Bug," has had a major role in setting up the mates program. "I like to think we are developing some capable mates while providing some worthwhile activities for these kids," he notes.

Fuller added the association is always looking for new candidates. Information can be obtained by calling (609) 290-3349.