

## Students at sea

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Brendan McNeill, a 1991 MMA graduate, teaches cadets about splices along the Cape Cod canal at MMA, which is hosting the cadets for a week of training.

Cape Cod Times/Steve Heaslip

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BUZZARDS BAY — Benjamin Levesque readied himself for a row. The 15-year-old Fall River resident was on day five of a weeklong-training session with the Naval Sea Cadet Corps.

This day's mission included braving the waters of the Cape Cod Canal, along with five of his comrades and one supervisor, in a 24-foot-long rowboat.

The challenge: The rarity of the moment; that's what excited him.

"This is probably going to be the funnest part," Levesque said yesterday morning on campus of the Massachusetts Maritime Academy.

Levesque and 22 other Naval Sea Cadets spent the week at the academy campus, learning the ins and outs of the maritime world. They learned about boat survival skills, held classes on topics such as the science of propulsion, and hit the waters of the canal.

The training session has been held at the academy for 13 years, said James McLoughlin, commander of a Buzzards Bay-based division of the Naval Sea Cadet Corps. The Corps is a nationwide group, associated with all branches of the U.S. military, but funded by the non-profit Navy League of the United States. It trains youth between 11 and 18 years old in leadership skills and introduces them to the maritime world.

Cadets who graduate and join the military enter on a higher pay scale than recruits who don't have a Corps background, McLoughlin said.

Several months each year, students meet every other Saturday for training.

"One of the main things we are trying to teach them is teamwork," McLoughlin said, as the students prepared their rowboats and motorized boats yesterday morning. This year's summer crew came from around the Northeast and the South.

A few moments later, he handed out a lesson.

One of the younger cadets asked him if two of his peers had to be paired up tougher. Yes, McLoughlin assured him.

"But they don't get along," the cadet insisted.

"They have to work together," McLoughlin reminded him. Heavy winds kept them out on the rowboats for only an hour, but they returned to the waters in motorized boats.

Levesque said he wasn't disappointed. He enjoyed how much the water's currents affected the rowing.

"I loved it," he said.

Ana Vento, now 15, joined the Naval Sea Cadet Corps three years ago. Her mom wanted Ana to join for the discipline. Soon, the New Jersey girl was hooked by the teamwork and learning about an unknown maritime world. This week was her first time at the summer Buzzards Bay program. She plans on it not being her last.

"I'm going to come back for two more years," she said.

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**Betep**

July 04, 2008 09:52 AM

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Good show Sea Cadets! Too bad there are no Cape kids mentioned. Is there a Sea Cadet program on Cape? Sea Scouts? I know it's not currently P-C, but some responsibility like the "Scout Oath" are pretty good in a society.

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