

Boat-building Festival sends funds in nonprofit's direction

It raises thousands for the Compass Project, which hosts boat-building and rowing classes for kids.

By **ELBERT AULL**
Staff Writer

Eliza Skidgel of South Portland is 12 years old and, if all goes well, will have finished building her second boat by Tuesday afternoon.

Skidgel was one of a handful of girls from a local arts group who pieced together the hull of a 12-foot rowing skiff Sunday, at the start of the fourth annual Boatbuilding Festival in Portland's Monument Square.

It was her second festival visit, and Skidgel said her boat-building team from A

Company of Girls was making good progress.

"Last year we fell a little behind," she said.

Skidgel was one of more than 100 participants at the festival, which challenges teams to build a 12-foot Bevins Skiff in three days.

The event raises thousands for the Compass Project, an organization that hosts rowing and boat-building classes to teach children at risk of dropping out of area schools a combination of teamwork, mathematics and practical skills.

The program is also one way to ensure that a new generation takes up the centuries-old



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From left, Charles Parmalee offers advice as Lark Parmalee, 9, Joel Kirk, Lianne Parmalee, 10, and Jan Parmalee work together on a boat Sunday as part of the Compass Project in Monument Square. The Parmalee family, from Albany, N.Y., and the Kirk family, of Simbury Conn., have a home on Panther Pond in Raymond

Shawn Patrick Ouellette/
Staff Photographer

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Maine tradition of boat building, said Kathleen Egan, development coordinator for the group.

"We're keeping it alive by teaching teenagers," Egan said, noting that the five-year-old organization recently launched a boat-building apprentice program at Deering High School.

The three-day festival ends Tuesday afternoon, when the 20 participating teams launch their newly constructed fleet in Casco Bay, she said.

Most of the boat builders came from families that paid \$750 to participate. Others came from area youth and nonprofit groups.

The workshop generates income for participating organizations, as many either raffle or auction off the boats their volunteers create. Local businesses paid the entry fee of every nonprofit group building a skiff this year, organizers said.

"We're hopeful someone will buy (the skiff) and that will help the museum," said Mark Thompson, director of the Portland Harbor Museum, which sent eight volunteers to the workshop.

Charles Parmalee, 63, of Albany, N.Y., said his family plans to keep their skiff for use on Panther Pond in Raymond, where they have a summer home.

The Parmalees joined another Panther Pond family at the workshop; the two clans plan to share the skiff after they finish and



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Members of **A Group of Girls**, a Portland-based theater group, work together Sunday as part of the Compass Project. From left are Hannah Smith, 10, of Portland, Maya Letourneau, 11, of South Portland, Corcas Thete, 11, of Westbrook and Eliza Skidgel, 12, of South Portland.

The two families - including six children - have not settled on a name, Parmalee said.

"There are too many diverse opinions. We might have to drop them into a hat" and draw a name, he said.

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