

North Port to host kayak class at aquatic center

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NORTH PORT - North Port Parks and Recreation will use the city's new aquatic center to kick off a 16-hour course on how to kayak, so area residents can take better advantage of the city's 80-plus miles of canals and waterways, including the Myakkahatchee Creek.

The "Learn to 'Yak at NPAC" class, hosted from 8 to 10 a.m., starts Jan. 9, 2021, and runs for eight weeks.

The initial class – taught by Assistant Aquatics Supervisor Devon Poulos – is limited to eight participants, but it won't be the first time the pool at the North Port Aquatic Center has been used by kayaks.

This summer, youths played kayak dodge ball as part of the city's summer camp program.



Youths in summer camp at the North Port Aquatic Center participate in a game of kayak dodgeball. The city of North Port is partnering with the Florida Youth Conservation Centers Network to offer a kayak class that starts at the aquatic center before moving on to the city's canals and waterways.

"You become familiar with the paddles and how to enter the kayaks," Laura Ansel, the city parks and recreation marketing and outreach coordinator, said about the introductory classes at the

North Port Aquatic Center. “They’re going to practice flipping over the kayaks and learn how to recover.”

In addition to that, classes will cover everything from the proper way to wear a life vest to other personal protection equipment participants may need.

After that, classes will venture out into the city’s canals, so participants can practice what they’ve learned.

“One of the main missions of the North Port aquatic center is to help our community gain water safety skills,” Ansel said. “We want people to be safe when they’re in, on and around the water, and so this course is a part of that.

“We do have a lot of waterways,” she continued; “we wanted to provide a class for people who were thinking about it or people who had paddled a few times but could do with a refresher and learn how to be safe.



The canals were dredged by General Development Corp. in 1959 – largely for drainage – and connect to similar waterways in Port Charlotte, which were also built by GDC.

The class is open to all skill levels and costs \$60 for city residents and \$70 for nonresidents.

The Myakkahatchee Creek, upstream from Water Cater Control Structure 101, located at the city water treatment plant. The dock at left allows kayakers to exit the creek and carry their kayak downstream of the water control structure to continue their journey. HERALD-TRIBUNE ARCHIVE PHOTO

For more information, visit cityofnorthport.com/pool or call 941-429-7275.

The kayaks, life jackets and paddles are all available through a partnership with the Florida Youth Conservation Centers Network, which is a Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission initiative.