

Powerboat race brings fans to Port Huron and Sarnia



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The Batman Boat passes during time trials for the Port Huron-Sarnia International Offshore Powerboat Race Saturday, August 8, 2015 in Port Huron.

(Photo: JEFFREY M. SMITH / TIMES HERALD)

Mike Dixon was taking a photo Saturday of his son, Joshua, 12, standing in front of the Batman Boat at the Port Huron/Sarnia International Offshore Powerboat Races.

“The kids love it,” Dixon said. “We have a bunch of superhero fans and they think it’s the coolest thing on the water right now.”

Dixon and his wife, Carrie, and their kids, Mikalya, 14, Joshua, and Stephen, 7, are from Kansas City, Missouri. Their niece, Kaydence Newman, is from Edgewater, Maryland.

The Batman Boat is based out of Lake of the Ozarks, Missouri.

All those out-of-state names makes event organizer LeeAnn Baker happy. She said bringing people to Port Huron, and to Sarnia, from out the area is one the reasons for the boat race.

“We always want the hometown people to come and support us, but we want to use it as an economic driver for our community,” she said. “We had a couple of people come in from Nashville, Tennessee. We’ve had people come in from Pennsylvania.

“That’s what we are looking for.”

She said crowds turned out for the free concert Friday evening.

“We had a packed house and everyone who was there really seemed to enjoy it,” Baker said.

Scott Scandalito, owner of Lynch’s Irish Tavern, 2109 Huron Blvd., said he didn’t see the bump in business he was hoping for.

“It’s good for the town,” he said. “People are downtown, moving around and looking at things.”

He said his sales were normal to a little less.

“But there were a couple of other things going on in town, too,” he said. “I have no complaints.”

But Brian Lossing said he was busy. The Fargo resident was packing up after a morning in the C. Roy’s Processing tent at the Vantage Point Farmers Market.

“There’s probably twice as many people down here today,” he said. “We sold a lot of product today — a lot of tourists, a lot of people from out of state.”

Carrie Dixon said the family was in town from out of state visiting relatives — her mom and dad are Kirk and Carolyn Schuetz, the new majors at The Salvation Army Citadel.

“It was really neat watching the boats come in and how fast they are,” she said.

The Missouri River, she said, is nothing like the St. Clair River — and Canada isn’t on the other side.

David Denham is the driver of Pirate Racing, which competes in the Super V Lite class. His son, Travis, is the throttleman. They’re from Chattanooga, Tennessee.

David Denham said the crew was loving the weather — a little rainy, a little overcast and temperatures in the 70s.

“This is cool,” he said. “When we left Chattanooga, it was 103 degrees with 95 percent humidity. It was a steam bath.”

Pirate Racing was in the area two weeks ago to compete at the St. Clair River Classic Offshore Powerboat Race in St. Clair.

“The fan base is absolutely wonderful,” Denham said. “We are super pleased with the venue. We are just thrilled to death.”

Brian Duncan and Ruby Garneau were watching a large crane load the raceboats load into the Black River. Duncan is from Sault Ste. Marine, Ontario — Garneau, his brother-in-law, is from Sarnia.

“Last year I came down and didn’t see the race,” Duncan said. “This year I came down and wanted to see the race.”

He said although there are activities in Sarnia, and the raceboats do come close to the Ontario shore, Port Huron has the wet and dry pits and spectators can get close to the boats and drivers.

“This is where the action is,” Duncan said. “You’re right up close to the boats. We wanted to see what it was like here.”

Garneau said they were probably going to find a place to eat and relax with a cold beverage.

“We’re just over here for the afternoon,” Duncan said. “Checking out the sights.”

He said what pulls him to the raceboats is the speed.

“They’re just fast,” Duncan said. “I like fast things.”

“I like the sound they make,” Garneau said. “They just sound like they have power.”

Jose Peña said he was enjoying the waterfront and the boat races.

“It’s great,” the Port Huron resident said. “Too bad we don’t have June and August all year-round.”

He said he talks up the area to people who don’t live here.

“I take lots of pictures and I send them down to my relatives in San Antonio and Mexico,” he said.

Debbie Moss was seated on the concrete wall at Vantage Point, watching the powerboats roar up and down the St. Clair River while kicking up plumes of spray. She was waiting for her husband, George.

“We’re here just to watch the powerboats, and went to the farmers market,” she said.
“It’s a nice day to be down here. ...

“Just being on the waterfront s beautiful.”

She said such events, using assets such as the waterfront and the river, are “good for the city, they’re good for the economy and they’re good for small businesses.”

Baker said the event seemed to generate a lot of excitement.

“We’re bringing people in from out of town,” she said., “We want them to experience our whole beautiful area.

“We want the general public in our area to come down and support us, but we want people in other states to find out about our beautiful area.”

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