

## Learning the Basics

Bay museum hosts weekly boatbuilding courses in North East, Md.

Visitors who spend time at the Upper Bay Museum, perched on the banks of the Northeast River, not only have the opportunity to learn about nautical treasures, they also have the chance to build some of their own. At its spacious, waterfront location, the museum offers a variety of courses through their Chesapeake Wooden Boat Builders School (CWBBS)—classes like Wood and Canvas Canoe Restoration, the Wooden Boat Shop, the Model Shop, Teen Boat Building and much more. Sessions run from 7 to 9:30 p.m. every Tuesday.

Throughout the year (except high summer), CWBBS provides specialized courses through Harford Community College and Cecil Community College. The goal is to teach students the necessary techniques to work on wooden models and vessels—painting, tool sharpening and steam bending planks, among others. Once these skills have been sufficiently developed, students may construct and restore their own boats.

According to co-director Bud Gillis, classes like these are an ideal way to gain real experience with boat construction. Instructors are skilled builders, and the woodshop “classroom” environment is laid-back and fun. “We love to teach folks—men and women—about how to build wooden boats. It involves a lot of camaraderie with all of us working together,” he said.

During the summer season, all adults are welcome to join the school for a more open and general educational class. The sessions are supported and run by a group of knowledgeable volunteers who love to

pass on their woodworking know-how. These summer sessions in particular are not limited to any one project. In late May of 2016, for example, different students were building detailed model canoes, the framework of a cocktail racer, and a sizeable recreation of an heirloom Penn Yan boat.

Jim St. John, a new student of the summer session, explained that as a naval architect by profession, he had always been interested in boat construction. This class gave him the opportunity to start working on something new—something on a smaller, more personal scale. Reflecting on the class’s impact on the community, he said, “I think it’s great. It really gets a lot of people on the water, and people around here should be having fun on boats!”

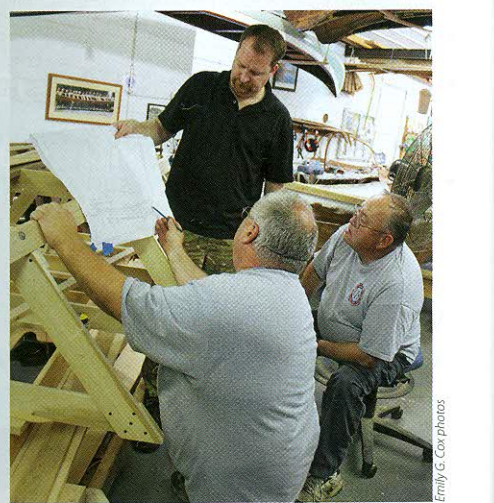
Whether they offer a new hobby or help support the Bay’s nautical roots, these courses provide students with ample opportunities. Classes are limited, so aim to register through Harford Community College or Cecil Community College before the start of the season.

For more information, go to [www.upperbaymuseum.org](http://www.upperbaymuseum.org).

—Emily G. Cox

### Upper Bay Museum

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TOP TO BOTTOM: Hank Seike (left) and Bob Silcox work on a cocktail racer; Craig “Hank” Passi tends to his model canoe; and Jeff VanBemmel (back), Jeff Rickenbach (left) and Bob Knauf review construction plans.

Emily G. Cox photos