

## Q & A WITH DAVID CAYLOR

*TWA members and others are talking to writer Sharon Babcock about enduring inspirations, life lessons, and perspectives from their experiences on the working waterfront.*

*This month is the eighth installment in the series: David Caylor, a senior at Stadium High School and a member of the Sea Scouts.*



“Growing up, I rarely got to sit in the front seat of the family car,” says David Caylor, senior at Stadium High in Tacoma. Some years back, a tour of the engine room of the 90-foot Sea Scout training vessel *Odyssey* showed him that he could have opportunities to do things most kids cannot do.

Joining the program has provided chances for David and his peers to experience quality maritime skills training that leads to solid values, effective leadership and teamwork, and concern for the environment. In its home at the Tacoma Youth Maritime Center, the program is a place for developing skills and confidence through training in leadership, citizenship, and personal fitness. Its intent is to instill strength of character and life skills, discipline, self-esteem, self-reliance, and problem solving. Success is both personal and team-based. Programs include intensive navigation, safe boating, small engine repair, diesel mechanics, fiberglass repair and other related maritime skills.

David speaks about his experiences with candor.

### **Q: What brought you to Tacoma Sea Scouts?**

A: My original goal was to have fun. I was an Eagle Scout with a troop on Dash Point. Sea Scouts had an open house, where we toured the training vessels. I’ve been addicted ever since.

### **Q: What have you learned?**

A: Moving from skills like being able to tie a simple knot to being able to teach others how to tie knots to leading the group. That boats in the water are a magnet to teens. You can use them to teach character and responsibility. That my job is to make people want to be there. It is not about a clean boat and winning trophies, though this group has a shelf full, most recently from the Dress Power Boat division at Seattle’s Opening Day in May. That different people need different ways of being motivated—from joking to being firm. First I thought the boat was awesome. Now the people are awesome. It’s all about the people.

### **Q: How did that come about?**

A: Every six months youth in the program elect their leader. I’ve worked my way through the four ranks of Sea Scouts and serve now as Quartermaster. For two and a half years, I’ve been privileged to serve

the elected position of boatswain, overseeing other Sea Scout members on the Charles N. Curtis (a 78-foot motor vessel built for the United States Coast Guard in 1931).

**Q: What affect does having young women in the program have?**

A: I've learned that it is much easier to work together than in the tension of the school environment. We bond doing very difficult things. Our code of conduct insists that we treat the opposite sex as business associates. When you are in the program, scouts is the focus.

**Q: Have you had challenges with that?**

A: Yes. When guys see the machinery of the boat, they want to take over. Those are times when I need to take them aside (my dad taught me to discipline in private) to tell them that the young woman is qualified to work on the machine and 'why not give her a chance to do this?'

**Q: What surprises you?**

A: That adults are continually not expecting to see youth responsible for the boat's operation, maintenance, and safety.

**Q: Who makes up Sea Scouts?**

A: Youth who live for adventure; who are willing to get their hands dirty, take risks, accept failure, receive criticism, fix a problem on the spot; who want to have fun.

**Q: What is the best thing that has happened in your years as a Sea Scout?**

A: Working with five or six other Sea Scouts as crew members when we bring a Boy Scout troop aboard for a week-long training cruise. You get to know what your teammates are thinking.

**Q: The worst?**

A: Scraping the boat on a dock while landing. My personal errors in leadership—before I understood the primacy of people in all of it. People lost interest in what they were doing.

**Q: What does success look like for you and for Sea Scouts?**

A: Following graduation in May, I'm heading for Clover Park Technical College for a certificate in aviation maintenance. I will be involved with water and youth somehow, though probably not related to my work. I do feel an obligation to give back. I'd like to see more young people taking advantage of the Sea Scout program, showing up, and being engaged. Participating in this program will get members interviews down the road. I look at how its lessons matter 10 or 20 years from now in how we function as CEOs, husbands, wives, dads, and moms.