

# Reader-Built BOATS

As the director of the Alexandria Seaport Foundation in Alexandria, Virginia, Joe Youcha prepared young people for the work force by teaching them to build boats. Many students lacked basic math skills when arriving at ASF and Youcha noticed that their understanding of these concepts improved through the hands-on construction projects. In 1997, he and the other boatbuilders at ASF designed the 11'8" x 4'4" Bevin's Skiff as a specific tool to teach those skills. Since then, more than 2,000 skiffs have been built.

In 2011, Youcha started the Building to Teach ([buildingtoteach.com](http://buildingtoteach.com)) program to show teachers how to implement math skills through hands-on activities in their own classrooms. As of 2017, more than 12,000 students in 44 states had participated in the program, which is popular in both community and academic settings. The following pages show four groups who have benefited from Joe's work.

To buy plans for Bevin's Skiff, visit [alexandriaseaport.org](http://alexandriaseaport.org). Plans are free to download for instructors who sign up for Building to Teach.



BRANDON CLARK (TOP), LOWCOUNTRY MARITIME SOCIETY (LEFT)

**Above and top**—In Charleston, South Carolina, Tripp Brower, Zoë Coombs Niehaus, and Hall West of the Lowcountry Maritime Society work with students in local schools to build Bevin's Skiffs over the course of a semester or a full year, with the goals of teaching boatbuilding and math skills, teamwork, communication, and maritime history. LMS holds an annual regatta called the Cassidy Cup. All the boats in the regatta are Bevin's Skiffs built by the students at the region's various schools. The racers build their own wooden spars to convert their rowboats into sailboats. Rig design is up to the skipper of each boat, leading to a wide variation in sail shapes.



PATRICK MCBRIARTY (BOTH)

**Left**—The Chicago Maritime Arts Center formed in 2017 with the mission of teaching maritime arts and marine ecology to local youth. To date CMAC has delivered four programs, including a two-week July Boat Building Camp for 11- to 15-year-olds building two Bevin's Skiffs at Southern Shores Yacht Club in Jackson Park. Most of the thirteen participants never expected their first time on the water would involve launching and rowing a boat they built themselves. Find out more at [www.ChicagoMaritime.org](http://www.ChicagoMaritime.org).

## Building to Teach with Bevin's Skiffs



STUDENTS OF SDCI (BOTH)

**Above**—David Vine, instructor of the Grade 10 Construction Technology program at Strathroy (Ontario) District Collegiate Institute, led 15 students in a semester-long program of math and technological studies. Among other projects, the class built three Bevin's Skiffs, two of them sailing versions. Vine reports that his students weren't even aware they were learning math. They used marine plywood for the hull and rudder, and the daggerboard and its trunk. They built the transom, risers, thwarts, frames, and gunwales of Douglas-fir. Fastenings are silicon-bronze ring nails. The class launched the boats—SEAS THE DAY, KNOT 2 BAD, and SAINTS LEGASEA—in June at Fanshawe Yacht Club in London, Ontario.

**Right**—In spring 2018, three organizations in Halifax, Nova Scotia, collaborated to build two Bevin's Skiffs over three days. Shane Theunissen, a Child and Youth Study professor at Mount St. Vincent University, partnered eight university students with three high school students from the HomeBridge Youth Society's "Bridges for Learning" program. Eamonn Doorly, marine conservation assistant at the Maritime Museum of the Atlantic, taught tool use and boatbuilding techniques to all participants. The group launched THE WANDERER and VERSACE at the museum on April 25. Theunissen wanted his students to learn how to provide safe environments and meaningful experiences for the youth in their care. His video, *Building Safe Spaces and Small Craft*, can be seen at [bit.ly/SB2019safespaces](http://bit.ly/SB2019safespaces). For more information, contact [shane.theunissen@msvu.ca](mailto:shane.theunissen@msvu.ca) or visit [maritimemuseum.novascotia.ca](http://maritimemuseum.novascotia.ca).



MEGHAN TAYLOR (BOTH)