

IS THE BOAT SHOW FOR KIDS?

If kids like the wacky antics of a Great Lakes pirate or participating in a variety of hands-on activities, they won't be disappointed at this year's Progressive Mid-America Boat Show at the I-X Center, January 12-16.

"Kids are a big reason we own our boats," says show manager Bryan Ralston, "and boating is America's number one family sport. We want them to expect a good time at the show so we take care to build in activities just for them." Here are some highlights:

All-New Kids Casting Fun! New this year in an expanded kids zone will be a kids casting demo area where they'll get to cast at targets. Conducted by a local fly-fishing expert, Craig Wood, in addition to the casting challenges, Wood will also conduct workshops on fly fishing and steelhead fishing basics for kids. Oh, yes, and adults can sit in, too!

The Capt. Willie Show! It's a unique combination of education and entertainment – call it "edutainment" -- combining real facts about the lakes and water safety with music, stories and the zany personality of Capt. Willie, the Great Lakes Pirate. "Shiver me timbers," before each show is over, he'll have the kids literally parading around as wannabe pirates. Why even adults are often seen jumping into the fun. When the kids hear "Arrrrrgh," they'll know it's the start of another Capt. Willie stage show. His schedule is: FRIDAY at 4:30pm and 6:30pm; SATURDAY at 1:30pm, 3:30pm, 5:30pm and 7:30pm; SUNDAY 2:00pm and 4:00pm; and MONDAY all pirates rally in West Lobby at 1:15pm for a special Pirate Parade. Shows at 2:00pm and 4:00pm.

Rollin' On The River! If parading like a pirate isn't enough, kids will be able to make like a hamster running their wheels in the floating Water Rollerz feature. These popular giant clear inflatable bubbles are floating in a special pool and are the latest craze in "water-walking" – sort of a contemporary version of log rolling, but dry! (Note: There is a \$5 fee)

Yes, There are Mermaids! Who says Mermaids are just in storybooks? Kids will meet the Boat Show Mermaid. It's a unique photo op for the whole family (get your smartphone out) to be pictured with this beautiful lady, fish tail and all! (Saturday and Sunday Only)

Ride the Giant Wheel! Kids can pick up a "Passport to Fun" at the Public Service Exhibits section where they can participate in many hands-on activities, ranging from rope tying to building a little sailboat, offered by those exhibitors. Kids having their "Passport" stamped at every activity will earn a free ride on the I-X Center's iconic giant Ferris Wheel.

Check the Daily Schedule: Throughout the 5-day show, particularly on Saturday, Sunday and Dr. Martin Luther King holiday, there will be different daily activities just for kids

Show Hours for 2017 will be: Thursday (1/12) Noon – 9 pm; Friday (1/13) Noon to 9 pm; Saturday (1/14) 11 am – 9 pm; Sunday (1/15) 11 am – 6 pm; and Monday (Martin Luther King Holiday), 11 am – 5 pm.