



WINGRA BOATS

Wingra Boats has been in operation since the 1950s providing the Madison community with fun, safe and inexpensive outdoor entertainment.

Wingra started out with a couple canoes and has grown to a rental fleet of over 100 boats. Wingra rents canoes, kayaks, rowboats, paddleboats, small and large sailboats, rowing shells, windsurfers and

swim rafts. They offer sailing and windsurfing lessons, private dockage, boat repair, and party & event hosting.

Wingra also offers Wingra Water Camps (WWC). Each camp is limited to 12 campers and led by two trained instructors. The three camps that Wingra offers are the Adventure Camp, Fishing Camp and Canoe & Kayak Camp. Adventure Camp is the "do it all" camp where the campers spend the morning on the water learning solo and tandem canoeing and kayaking techniques. Each afternoon, campers will explore a new site including Vilas Zoo, Vilas Beach and park, fishing at the locks, trail restoration at the Arboretum and searching for hidden treasure. At the Fishing Camp, campers will learn in-depth fishing techniques and at the Canoe & Kayak Camp campers will learn the basics of paddle sports. The campers will engage in paddling activities to teach them the benefits of teamwork, leadership, and safety.

Tyler Leeper, the owner of Wingra Boats, started working at Wingra around the age of 15, became a manager while he was in college and bought the company when he got out of college. Tyler has owned the company for four years. Tyler said, "The main storage facility has burned down twice over the life of the company but has come back strong each time." Wingra Boats is a seasonal business with Tyler being the only year-round full-time employee. However, every summer, Tyler brings on seasonal help. Tyler's mother helps with managing the business at the new Vilas location and his father is a lawyer for the company. Tyler joked that anyone that hangs around him long enough will be put to work.

Recently, SBA was able to assist Tyler with an SBA Express loan that allowed him to do "a number of things" including opening a new location for his boat rentals on the Vilas Zoo side of Wingra Lake. Tyler said the loan was "easy and cheap" because of the fees being waived. "The SBA loan allows us to expand access to the lake and provide a city-wide service." "There is a lot more foot traffic at the additional location along with new and different clientele. We will be planning some Spanish-speaking kayak lessons."

Wingra Boats is one of the few access points to the beautiful 345-acre Lake Wingra. Over eighty-five percent of the lake's shoreline is protected by the University of Wisconsin Madison Arboretum. The lake has a number of inlets and lagoons that play host to a flourishing ecosystem. The seasons bring in herons, ospreys, cranes, turtles, water lilies and all manner of fish. No gas-powered boats are allowed on weekends and wake is never allowed, making it an ideal place for small boats.



SBA is proud to have been of assistance to this energetic entrepreneur who is a dedicated small business owner who loves what he does.