

Bobber the Water Safety Dog Returns

by Jess Levenson
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After a demanding nation-wide tour, the Corps of Engineers' star mascot Bobber the Water Safety Dog returned to the Cape Cod Canal Visitors Center in Sandwich, Massachusetts, July 25, to help save lives in New England.

Bobber is the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Water Safety Program's ideal spokes dog. He travels the country performing the impossible, no, not walking on his hind legs, but impressing water safety upon audiences of all ages.

Bobber joined Park Rangers Samantha Gray and Elisa Carey at the Canal Visitors Center. The Rangers don't have a popular animated web-series like Bobber, but together they are vital to the Corps' water safety efforts ensuring proper safety measures are put into practice.

"The Corps is the nation's leading provider of water-based recreation, but sadly, people are getting hurt while taking advantage of available water recreation activities," laments Gray. "That's where Bobber and the Corps Water Safety Awareness Program come in."

Scores of guests streamed through the Cape Cod Canal Visitors Center, commenting on the assorted galleries and simulators, and climbing aboard a full-size tug on exhibit.

The loneliest display in the whole room was the life-jackets. Rangers Gray and Carey waited patiently until a family sidled over. Carey slipped away as Gray introduced herself.

The parents admitted their ignorance and the risk of letting their kids on the water without proper water safety knowledge. Ranger Gray stroked her chin, snapped her fingers, and cried, "Oh, Bobber!"

A mammoth golden retriever, wearing a giant life-vest, came bounding out of nowhere! The family's mouths hung agape. "Bobber, can you explain to these kind folk why water safety education is so important?"

"Woof, woof, roof!" Bobber boomed, wiping his paws together.

"Everybody wants to go home to their families," Gray translated. "Plain and simple."

Another wide-eyed young family showed up. "How can we enjoy the water when our kids are so young?"

"Roof, rup-rup, woof!" Bobber cried, miming a front crawl.

"Aha! Bobber's Four Golden Rules of Water Safety!" announced Gray. "One: learn to swim well."

"Arf-arf, bark, arf!" Bobber continued, holding a paw flat over his head. "Two: Don't swim in water over your head." Bobber nodded with his tail wagging. He pulled Ranger Gray to his side and yowled deeply.

"Three: always have an adult with you! And number four is my favorite: always wear a personal flotation device!"

Bobber's tail revved and his tongue rolled around like it was about to fall off! Drawn to the excitement, more astonished families arrived.

"Bobber, how can you make such a serious subject fun?" asked one.

Gray stepped in. "I'll handle this one, big guy," she said. "We play games, of course! 'Reach, Throw - Don't Go!', 'Dunk-a-Ranger', 'Cold Hand Luke', or the classic 'Does it Fit?' who wants to play that one right now?"

A little girl's hand shot up. Ranger Gray and Bobber strapped her in the smallest life-vest available.

"It's like Cinderella's slipper!" she giggled.

"Last question!" Sam warned. The session was coming to a close.

"What's it like travelling the country spreading your message?"

Ranger Sam's daughter, Penelope, parted the crowd and handed Bobber a drawing of them together on the tug boat. Bobber yipped and danced.

"Bobber gets to spend time with people he cares about," concluded Gray. "He couldn't have a better job in the world."

For more information, please visit:

- Bobber's website - <http://bobber.info/>.

- The Water Safety Program website - http://www.usace.army.mil/Missions/Civil-Works/Recreation/National-Water-Safety_Program/.

- The Cape Cod Canal Visitors Center website - <http://www.nae.usace.army.mil/Missions/Recreation/Cape-Cod-Canal/>.