

Neighboring Florida Franchises Celebrate Anniversaries



As neighboring Sea Tow Franchises Big Bend and Port St. Joe in Florida celebrate milestone anniversaries, there's one thing that is certain, COVID-19 has changed their business more than anything they have experienced in their combined 35 years of service.

Capt. Joel Singletary, owner of Sea Tow Big Bend, has seen the sun rise more this year than he can ever remember. It's not uncommon for Capt. Joel to already be in his truck at 4 a.m. headed to either Rock Landing Marina in Panacea, Fla. or Shields Marina in St. Marks, Fla., where he keeps several of his boats. This isn't the typical routine for the captain who is celebrating his 15th year in business, but in the past six months it has become his routine.

"This is by far the busiest year we've had in our 15 years of operating Sea Tow Big Bend," Capt. Joel said. "I'll tell you one thing is for certain. People are spending more time out on the water. I can't blame them either, my corner office from the console of my boat has a pretty nice view of the sunrise at 6 in the morning."

Capt. Joel has a constant drive to find the best way to serve boaters in the community and a passion for educating himself and his team. The franchise has seven employees, one of those includes Capt. Joel's wife Tracie, who is a school teacher during the year, but works as office manager dispatching calls, handling paperwork and answering the phones during the summer. There are also six other captains and six boats used to cover 105 miles of coastline where the Florida Panhandle starts.

At Sea Tow, captains like Joel have a passion for the water and love being able to serve as a resource for members and the boating community. They bring different experiences to the table and help to provide boaters the education and safety needed. The same goes for Capt. Dennis Douglas, who owns Sea Tow Port St. Joe, just to the west of Sea Tow Big Bend and is celebrating his 20th anniversary.

Similar to his Big Bend neighbor, Capt. Dennis has also seen an uptick in boaters taking advantage of the water as a way to social distance naturally.

“We are experiencing one of the busiest seasons on the books,” he noted. “Fishing has been gangbusters, especially the Red Snapper, and scalloping season will soon be here bringing even more boaters out.”

The Saint Joseph Bay typically has upwards of 1,000 boats with families hoping to catch the delicious mollusks. Capt. Douglas has been putting in extra time making sure that he is staffed and has equipment ready to go for those busy weekends ahead.

Twenty-one years ago, the view on the water looked much different to Capt. Dennis. Before he became owner of Sea Tow Port St. Joe, he set the top speed record for the Super Stock Outboard class. Powerboats were his passion and to set a record like that was a goal he only dreamed he could achieve until that moment.

“If you enjoy the water as much as I do, it kind of gets into your blood,” Capt. Dennis said. “It is not always a bright and sunny, but as the local experts, we are always standing by ready to help. There is a certain amount of excitement to the work and being able to bring boaters in the area a sense of security while out enjoying the amazing waters and fishing we have here.”

Saltwater runs through Capt. Dennis’ blood, as does boating safety and education. He has worked to make a difference in his community as the host of multiple Sea Tow Foundation Life Jacket Loaner Stations.

“The Life Jacket Loaner Stations are one of the best programs that we’ve ever been part of,” Capt. Dennis said. “If you save one person’s life, what is it worth? To me the world. That is why I worked so hard to host four stations in the Port. St. Joe area.”

Although the 2020 boating season looks a lot different than years past, one thing remains the same – the dedication both Capt. Joel and Capt. Dennis have to Sea Tow. We are honored to celebrate milestone anniversaries this month with these two phenomenal captains.