

CANOECCOPIA



sponsored by



**MARCH 7-9,
2025**

**ALLIANT ENERGY CENTER
MADISON, WISCONSIN**

Welcome to Canoecopia

The premier kick-off to the paddling season, by Darren Bush

Welcome to what?

If you know, you know. If not, Canoecopia is the world's largest paddlesports exposition. We didn't start out to make it that way, we just wanted to make it the best. But as happens so often, good stuff grows.

What's Rutabaga Paddlesports?

A family-owned and operated outdoor shop that specializes in getting people on the water. We create communities and strive to improve people's quality of life, that's it.

We sell canoes, kayaks, SUP boards, outdoor equipment and clothing, and vehicle racks. If you want to get outside, we've got it.

Who are we?

My family has been part of the business from the day I started working for Rutabaga long before I was owner. So here's a little background on my family.

Whitney's my firstborn, teaches science in Brooklyn, New York, and comes home to paddle during the summer. She's one of my favorite people, and she taught kids' classes at the shop in the summers she was in high school. She's one of the most competent people I have ever met.

Ian's my second born with recessive Viking genes, got his first paddle before he could stand up. He's as gentle as he is tall. He got a tandem canoe when he was 10 and still owns it, taking it with him on his honeymoon with this wife Britney. He makes industrial equipment and his own lightsabers from scratch. I have never seen a man paddle so effortlessly and with such grace.

Then there's my wife, Stephanie. If you know her, you're fortunate. If you don't, trust me, she's remarkable. We've been married 40 years, and I can't think of a better partner.

Thank you

My email signature has had this quote in it for years, from the Stoic philosopher Lucius Annaeus Seneca:

Nothing is more honorable than a grateful heart.

I wholeheartedly agree. I try my best to cultivate being thankful for my life. Not that it's easy, mind you; it is anything but. I'm grateful for the challenges we face. It makes us stronger. It hurts, yes, but that's part of being alive.

I am truly grateful for our staff. They are good people, all of them. We hire all our people for their character, wisdom, and kindness, as well as their skills and knowledge. They're not Human Resources, they're *Human Beings*. They're the reason we have 4.9 stars on Google reviews.

You have (collectively) allowed me to make a living doing this. I started at Rutabaga at Canoecopia 1990, wearing a boot cast from a broken fibula, putting

price tags on dry bags when I still had a "real" job, the kind with a paycheck and no risks involved. But there was a critical flaw in my work: I wasn't growing. I left the safety of the Public Health Bureau and made Rutabaga my career.

Eight years later, I was co-owner, and five years after that, sole owner. I never dreamed I'd run any business, let alone one as significant to the outdoor community as Rutabaga. Yet here I am, 22 years later.

I'm grateful for our manufacturers who make outstanding equipment to allow us all to enjoy the outdoors more easily and safely. Most of the manufacturers we work with are family-owned and operated, and we get each other. We call each other just to shoot the breeze sometimes. I doubt CEOs of multinationals do stuff like that.

I'm just grateful for everything.

Darren



2025 SHOW GUIDE CONTENTS

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Sheree on the Kishwaukee

What does it feel like to give people you love new experiences? Especially when it might be completely outside their wheelhouse? Ken Sofolo recounts his tale of taking Sheree on the Kish.



Frank of Frank Lake

How did Starrett Lake become Frank Lake, and how did the lovely mini-lake nearby get renamed Starrett? Darren Bush put on his investigative hat and learned a bit about a forgotten but beloved Ranger.



I'm Good at Canoes

What's the one thing you're the best at in this small group? It took Whitney Bush a little time to remember who her father was and her lifetime of being on the water, but she eventually realized that she's good at canoes. (*Ed—like reeeely good.*)

CANOECOPIA FAQs

- 2 Welcome to Canoeopia
- 4 Getting the Most out of CC
- 5 Policies & Procedures
- 79 Vendors & Exhibitors

REFLECTIONS ON PADDLING

- 56 Introduction
- 57 Lessons / Vibes From Camp
- 58 Allowing the River to Hold Space
- 60 Canoes, Kayaks, and Community
- 62 Sheree on the Kishwaukee
- 64 I'm Good at Canoes
- 67 Frank of Frank Lake
- 70 Lento vs. Presto
- 72 Camp Dog
- 73 Invasive Species PSA
- 74 Take Classes. Keep Learning

WHAT'S NEW

- 6 The Latest & Greatest Gear

SPEAKERS AND PRESENTATIONS

- 18 Speaker Topics
- 39 Speaker Schedule

RUTABAGA OUTDOOR ADVENTURES

- 51 Kestelman Scholarship Fund
- 52 Classes
- 54 Camp Rutabaga

REMEMBERING

- 76 Dan Cooke (1956-2024)

Canoeopia has always been presented by



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Getting the Most Out of Canoecopia

Our tips and tricks for maximizing your time at the show.

Come all three days. If we had one recommendation, that's it. There is so much to see; a weekend pass is a good investment.

Go to Presentations! Our speakers are world-class. Our speaker schedule starts on page 18. Sitting down can be educational and restorative.

Talk to everyone. The manufacturers, speakers, 'Baga staff, and exhibitors are here to answer any questions you have. We're all paddlers, and we love sharing experiences. Take advantage!

Sit in a lot of boats. Canoecopia offers an opportunity to sit in

hundreds of models under one roof. Ask for help adjusting the seats if necessary. You hope to spend a lot of time in that seat, yes? Make sure it fits perfectly.

Special order your dream gear. If we don't have it on the floor and you can wait 6-8 weeks, you can order it and pick it up at the shop.

Confused? Have questions? Lost something? Come to the Customer Service booth. We take the Service part *seriously*.



YAKIMA®

Load up, head out, and reel 'em in.

Your gear deserves a secure and hassle-free ride. With easy-to-use racks built to handle your toughest adventures, getting to the water has never been easier. Stop wasting time packing and start chasing your next big catch.

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How Does This Work In Practice?

Let's talk about how the tofu sausage gets made, shall we?

Boats and Trailers

To purchase a boat or trailer, go to the large Boat Check-Out area inside the main hall.

If we have your boat in stock, you can take it home that day. Proceed to the Boat Pick-Up booth at the back of the hall after making your purchase.

Special ordering a boat (or a boat not in stock)? A Rutabaga Staffer at the Boat Check-Out will explain the timeline for your boat arriving at Rutabaga. Forms are at each vendor booth and need to be filled out before you check out. Boat Special Orders go to the Boat Registers, everything else to the Accessory Registers.

Need a roof rack or trailer? Racks can be installed at the show if you are taking a boat home. Start this process early. It can take a while. Pay for trailers at a Boat Register, roof racks at Accessory Registers. If you don't need the rack right away, take it home and we'll install it later at Rutabaga (a \$50 value).

Layaways are an option if you want to pick up your boat a week or more after Canoeconopia. We ask for half of the purchase price. Deposits are fully refundable until June 14th.

Trade-ins for used boats are accepted. Please ask for details at the Boat Pick-Up booth or call us at Rutabaga prior to Canoeconopia.

Accessories (everything else)

Purchase accessories outside the hall. Accessory Register entrance is by the Customer Service booth.

If you don't need a rack to get your boat home from Canoeconopia, we're happy to install it later at Rutabaga.

We have shopping totes to carry your items. If you want to go see a speaker, leave your totes at one of the Tote Checks. *Shopping totes are emptied each night.* (They're also not for sale. Sorry.) Buy your stuff before you leave that day.

Special Orders—your special item isn't in stock? Staff in the vendor booths will fill out a form for you (make sure your contact information is complete). Bring the completed form with all of the rest of your accessory purchases to the Accessory Registers near the Customer Service booth.

Check-out lines move fast. The line time peaks just a little during the speaker changes.

Returns need to be in "like-new, sellable condition," with its tags, packaging, and receipt. All returns must be made by May 31 at Rutabaga.

Questions? Look for anyone wearing a staff shirt. They can give you an answer or direct you to the proper place to find it.

Where is Rutabaga? During Canoeconopia, we're at the Alliant Energy Center. Other than that, our new location is at 2620 Rimrock Road.

