



The boys at Safe Harbor Boys Academy enjoyed the learning experience of working with contractors to install the Academy's new marina.

private grants and donations; neither state nor federal funds are received. So far, it has helped over 1,100 young men and is immensely proud of its 94% success rate, with graduates who go on to become productive members of society.

Robbie Smith, co-founder, says: "Sailing and boating and going to sea is often romanticised (and it can be romantic), but it also requires knowledge, respect, self-reliance and perseverance. Knowledge of the ocean and river and the boat and its equipment. Respect for the elements and your equipment; its strengths and limitations. Self-reliance because out there no government agency, parent or friend is available to bail you out of problems, think for you or rescue you from the decisions you make. And finally, perseverance, because out there if you quit or give up, you die and there isn't someone else to do it for you."

These same principles and qualities are those that help at-risk boys get back on track, building character and integrity. Boys must stay at the academy for a minimum of one year and progress through a level system. This length of time enables each boy to progress, make mistakes, learn from those mistakes and ultimately learn to live a different way. Counselling is provided individually and through groups by licensed mental health professionals.

Rebuilding after Irma

This year, the marina is rebuilding after Hurricane Irma destroyed much of its dock system. Prior to the storm, the marina comprised a main dock and three fingers (A, B and C). During Irma, 90% of the main dock and all of the B and C fingers were lost. To move forward, the existing docks needed to be removed from the water with a crane and barge and then moved off the campus. The office also sustained substantial damage to the roof and exterior, and the back porch was torn off entirely by a tornado. The boat house sustained water damage in the lobby and an inspection identified wet insulation and rotting plywood walls.

The dock replacement was projected at US\$300,000 for materials, with

expert installation projected at around US\$20,000. The boys provided support and worked with the tradesmen, learning as the installation progressed. Alongside volunteers, the boys were responsible for clearing downed trees, removing vegetation left by the high water, collecting and removing dock waste and floating docks, pumping and re-positioning boats to avoid more loss by sinking, and repairing the remaining docks as much as possible.

The marina selected Golden Marine Systems to replace the docks. Anchored by concrete and wooden pilings, the Golden Marine Series 850 Single Track dock system comprises T6106 aircraft aluminium, tangent tan deck composite decking over Hendren Plastic Eagle Floats. All have a ten-year limited warranty. Berth size is adjustable due to the rail system, which allows the cleats to be moved as needed. Eaton Marina Power & Lighting supplied 12 30-amp and ten 50-amp Lighthouse pedestals, all plumbed for fresh water.

Michael Shanley, president of Golden Marine, said: "We are absolutely honoured to have been chosen to supply the dock system for the Safe Harbor Boy's Home project. Their mission of teaching youth various disciplines through boating not only grooms responsible individuals but helps promote boating. Golden Marine Systems and the family of Golden Manufacturing companies is a big proponent of youth, family and community programmes."

From delivery (below) to completion (above); new docks that, in total, offer 39 berths.



Back on track

Today, the marina has 39 berths, 24 of which have power and water. The average boat length at the marina is 30ft (9m) and the marina has 12 power boats ranging from 20ft (6m) to 115ft (35m) and 13 sail boats from 25ft (8m) to 44ft (13m). The marina's single superyacht berth is occupied by 'The Amazing Grace', a 115ft (35m) Derektor yacht, which was donated to the Boy's Home.

Programme director, Jim Filmont, says: "Our marina, with the installation of the Golden Marine system, puts us at the forefront of marinas in the

modern category." It is currently in the process of installing electricity, plumbing and sewage for the main dock and B finger.

There is an on site boat yard, primarily used for dry storage of boats on trailers. It has a 20 ton Acme marine hoist that is used to haul, clean and repair boats, along with a 4,000ft² (1,219m²) metal, wood and repair shop, where it handles repairs and renovations. The marina is also in the process of applying for a sewage grant to install pump-out stations. A requirement of the grant, Filmont says, is that the marina allows other boats to use the pump-out services. "We are investigating Wastecorp electric pump-out pedestals at the moment," he adds.

As the purpose of the marina is to serve at-risk boys, the marina is private and solely in place for the use of the boys, staff and volunteers. All boys live on their own boats and are responsible for them. The marina does not offer hospitality services for the general public.

"Our ideal capacity is 25 boys," Filmont says. "With our newly installed docks, we are increasing the number. Right now, we have six boys in the programme and are adding more. Through the generosity of private donors and grants, we are working back to full service. We are working diligently to raise the proceeds to replace the remaining C dock that has but a few years' life left."

www.boyshome.com

A safe harbour for troubled boys

It almost makes you want to misbehave. Safe Harbor Boys Academy in Jacksonville, Florida is a pioneer in what can only be described as "maritime rehabilitation". Sitting on one acre of land, this small marina lies directly behind Blount Island on the St John's River, nine nautical miles from the Atlantic Ocean.

The academy was founded accidentally 34 years ago, when a judge asked mental health counsellor Robbie Smith and her husband, Doug – a licensed clinical pastoral counsellor, ordained minister and friend of the judge – to care for a troubled boy on their large sailboat. For the boy, it was that or a stint in a juvenile hall. The Smiths were retired and about to embark on a round-the-world trip on their boat, but the judge wouldn't take no for an answer. The weekend was a tremendous success and triggered more pleas from the judge for the Smiths to help more boys. A non-profit programme was launched and formalised in 1984 and Safe Harbor is now an established boarding school drawing on maritime principles as a therapeutic model. This extraordinary story became the subject of a 2009 television film starring Treat Williams and Nancy Travis.

The academy serves adolescent boys who have experienced neglect, abuse or have lost one or more of their parents to death, divorce, desertion or incarceration. Safe Harbor features a team of professionals who provide a secure, stable and structured alternative to harsher juvenile programmes or more expensive therapy. Boys in minor trouble with the law or who exhibit bad behaviour or disrespect are taught responsibility, self-respect and respect for others through round-the-clock mentoring and counselling. The boys are also given spiritual instruction and character-building principles while on their formal education through the academy's in-house accredited school. As an independent school, it tailors the curriculum to meet the boys' needs, not to satisfy an external testing schedule.

Safe Harbor is funded solely by