



Community First Jacksonville Light Boat Parade to Coincide with Taxslayer Bowl

The 32nd Annual Parade Will Take Place Friday, Dec. 30.

JACKSONVILLE, FLORIDA, UNITED STATES, September 29, 2016 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Gator Bowl Sports announced today the return of the Community First Jacksonville Light Boat Parade to its roots. This year's event and fireworks show will take place Friday, Dec. 30, leading up to the 72nd annual TaxSlayer Bowl game Saturday, Dec. 31.

Jacksonville's treasured Light Boat Parade is a longstanding tradition for the community, dating back to 1984. The parade began as a celebration of the Gator Bowl with a purpose of not only providing exciting entertainment for visiting fans and the local community, but to also bring activity to one of the city's greatest assets, the St. Johns River. The Light Boat Parade also provides an opportunity for Jacksonville's boating community to take center stage in entertaining the over 200,000 people who annually attend this event.

The Light Boat Parade was operated by the City of Jacksonville for over 20 years. During the recessions, this event was cut from the City's budget. A group of local boating enthusiasts continued to operate the Light Boat Parade until 2014 when Gator Bowl Sports stepped in to breathe new life into this cherished event, which is now in its 32nd year.

"Moving the Light Boat Parade to coincide with the TaxSlayer Bowl will guarantee heightened promotion of the prized Light Boat Parade, as tens of thousands of fans will be staying in our downtown hotels in preparation for the game," said Gator Bowl Sports CEO Rick Catlett. "While we understand that our community has come to identify the Light Boat Parade with the Thanksgiving Day weekend, we are confident this move will help us grow the event while simultaneously showcasing our great city – and all it has to offer – to folks all across the country. We believe that long-term, this will boost our city's exposure and, in turn, our economic impact through increased tourism, all while remaining one of our city's premier events."

"We are excited about the 'New Night and the Same Great Tradition,'" said John Hirabayashi, CEO and president of [Community First Credit Union](#), the underwriting sponsor and namesake for the event. "We hope the entire community embraces the event with the enthusiasm it has in the past. The Community First Jacksonville Light Boat Parade showcases our beautiful St. Johns River and downtown skyline as well as our strong community spirit for the thousands of locals and visitors who are expected to attend."

"The boating community is excited for the opportunity to bring this great event back to the premium level that it once was," said Lisa Almeida, CEO of Freedom Boat Club in Jacksonville and St. Augustine. "The support of Gator Bowl Sports and sponsorship by Community First Credit Union has gotten us well along that path."

Registration is open for boaters interested in participating in the 32nd Annual Community First Jacksonville Light Boat Parade. The holiday tradition is free for all vessels, from canoes or kayaks to sailboats or houseboats. All decorations, ranging from simplistic to extravagant, are welcome. The deadline for registration is Dec. 16. Boaters may register at www.lightboatparade.com.

About The Community First Jacksonville Light Boat Parade

Marking its 32nd anniversary this year, the Community First Jacksonville Light Boat Parade features decorated vessels of all shapes and sizes parading through downtown along the St. Johns River, followed by one of the city's largest fireworks shows. The family-friendly, one-of-a-kind parade has become a holiday tradition for thousands of families and out-of-town guests who gather along the banks of the river to enjoy boats decked out for the holiday season.

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