

# Watersports returns to Ste. Anne waterfront



**The Lake of Two Mountains used to be home to some of Canada's best waterskiers.  
Mike Stamos wants to recreate those golden days.**

**by Jim Duff**

**STE. ANNE DE BELLEVUE** - With waterfronts on both Lake St. Louis and the Lake of Two Mountains, this historic waterfront town has a long history of water sports.

Back in the days before the superhighways and the ubiquitous family car, Ste. Anne boasted some of the most popular tourist hotels in the Montreal region, with outfitters and steamboat excursions through the rapids. In the '70s and '80s, the town enjoyed a reputation as a restaurant and bar hotspot for the boating community.

That rep faded as road construction, parking meters, mooring fees and a series of disastrous fires and business closures kept shoppers and boaters away, but that's changing as Ste. Anne begins to attract a different crowd. People are coming back to enjoy what brought their great-grandparents to Ste. Anne a century ago - access to water sports.

Leading the renaissance is Mike Stamos, one of Canada's top three waterskiing coaches. Five years ago, Stamos took over the small marina at the Lake of Two Mountains end of the canal,

installed new docking systems and began attracting boaters. Completely restored in 2008, it's home to 76 boats.

Next, he set up SkiWakeSurf, a program operating out of the former Parks Canada headquarters at 170 rue Ste-Anne, to offer quality watersports programs given by coaches certified by Waterski and Wakeboard Canada. This summer, Stamos is offering watersports camps for kids, a waterski club and the revolutionary new sport of wakesurfing behind Tigé 20 and 21-foot watersports boats with sound towers, wakeboard racks and all the toys.

"This company believes that we all should be able to use our waterfronts in the West Island," says Alison Birss, economic development officer for the West Island CLD. "It's the perfect opportunity for our West Island families to be able to try water sports right in their own backyard!"

Stamos set out to grow his business in steps, beginning with boat brokerage and slip rentals. Now he's offering what he had set out to do - give his clients a full range of motorized watersport options through his waterskiing, wakeboarding and wakesurfing courses and the equipment he sells.

This summer, he's linked up with local restaurants to offer packages, such as a \$75 Wakesurf 5 a 7, complete with supper. Enthusiasts can book a boat and one of his instructors for as little as an hour, but Stamos recommends booking a couple of hours among six friends, giving everyone plenty of time on the board.

He's equally proud of his school, which concentrates on 10 to 14-year-olds in the mornings, older teens from 1-5 and the Yuppie crowd in the evenings. Early mornings and sunsets are reserved for what he terms the hard-core old time slalom crowd like himself - he's 41.

Municipalities looking for ways to draw crowds to their waterfronts are watching what Stamos is up to but he doesn't see it being complicated. "My customers who dock their boats at the marina, also store their boats and now, bring their kids to our watersports school to teach them watersports. It's what I love to do and nobody else in our area is doing it at this level."

For more information please visit [www.skiwakesurf.com](http://www.skiwakesurf.com) or call Mike Stamos at 514 451-SURF (7873).

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