

# A new crew: Rowing picking up speed in Citrus County

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INVERNESS — It's 7 a.m. and the sun is about to rise over Big Lake Henderson in Inverness.



REZA ZAKARIA/Special to the Chronicle  
Connie Hicks enjoys an early morning row on Big Lake Henderson in Inverness. She's part of the Rowing Organization of Citrus County Students master's program, which is geared toward adults.

Connie Hicks, 70, puts her sculling shell into the water at Wallace Brooks Park and takes off across the lake. She rows slowly, rhythmically, gaining speed as she cuts through the water.

"I come almost every morning at this time," she said Monday morning. "It's peaceful and quiet and you always get to see the sun come up."

Being on the water is nothing new for the native Citrus County resident. Born and raised in Homosassa Springs, her parents owned Nature's Giant Fishbowl back in the 1950s.

After she and her first husband divorced she married Lynn Hicks, whose family owned orange groves around Citrus County, and settled in Inverness.

The rowing, or sculling, started after her granddaughter, Hunter, got involved in Rowing Organization of Citrus County Students (ROCCS), the program for middle and high school students.

"She participated in the summer program, and I'd bring her and pick her up sometimes," Hicks said. "They had an end-of-summer picnic and I went with her and got to row in one of the eight-men boats."

She said she was "somewhat inept," but loved it anyway and decided to train with Terry Davison of Inverness Rowing.

Davison, an avid rower himself, has a gym set up in Inverness with stationary rowing machines so people new to the sport can get the feel of what it takes to scull or sweep.

Sculling refers to using two oars. Sweeping uses one oar held with both hands, and is done in pairs. (Think of a crew team rowing in sync.)

"Sculling is a lot harder," Davison said. "It takes a bit of balance and coordination. If you can scull, sweep rowing is easy."

Hicks said she had kayaked and canoed before when she was younger, but sculling is different. The main difference is in the use of one's legs.

"You 'drive' with your legs, not just your arms," she said. "It's low-impact, but still full-body exercise — and you don't strain anything. The most challenging part is learning the mechanics of the rowing."

Davison said it's all about challenging your balance and coordination. Novices start off in a boat with floats on either side and graduate to a narrow shell.

"I'd go by on (State Road) 44 and see the boats out, and it looked interesting," Hicks said. "I knew they did it in the northeastern states and I was intrigued that they did it here."

She added that she originally thought it was just for kids and younger people, but she discovered anyone can do it.

ROCCS, originally the Lecanto High School crew team, includes about 20 local high school students and as many middle school students.

"We travel all around the state doing regattas and competing," Davison said.

As for adults, Davison said in the past three months he's gone from three adults to nearly 20.

"It's addictive and it's growing," he said. "Everybody who does it tells someone else."

For more information, visit online at [www.crewroccs.com](http://www.crewroccs.com), call Terry Davison at (352) 422-7366 or email him at [tdavison5@tampabay.rr.com](mailto:tdavison5@tampabay.rr.com).

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