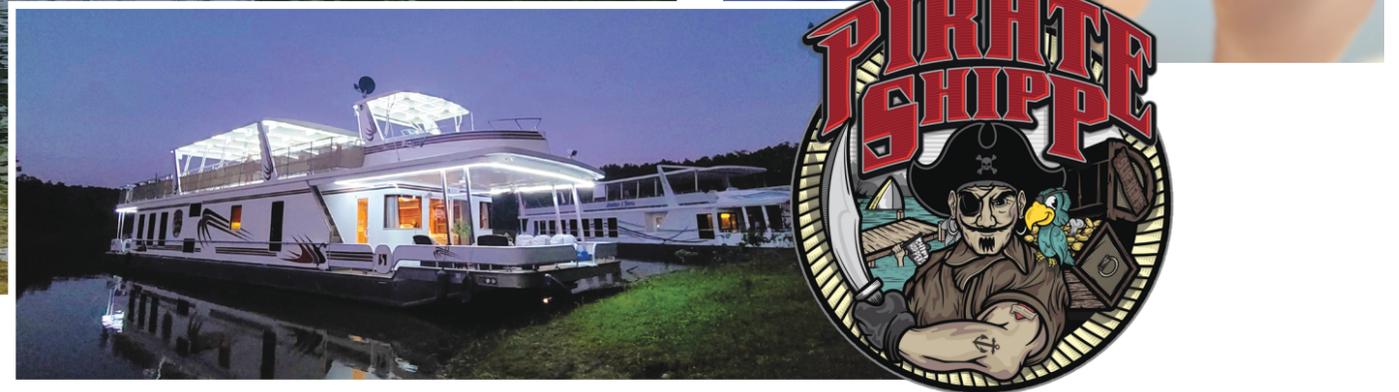


# LIVING ON LAKE TIME

BY TIFFANY HORTON, HORTON DESIGN STUDIOS  
SUBMITTED PHOTOS



**How do you make the most of summer?** By spending as much time as you can on a houseboat, of course! Texarkana residents Rebecca and Chad Shipp warmly welcomed us to take a look at their houseboat appropriately dubbed “Pirate Shipp,” at nearby DeGray Lake.

It is a beautiful 18’ x 91’, four-bedroom boat the Shipp’s bought in 2018. It is the second houseboat they have owned since starting this journey 14 years ago. Stepping inside, you might be surprised to find all the comforts of home, including high-end finishes like granite countertops, a tile backsplash, standard size appliances, a cozy sectional and even a dining table that seats six. “You have everything you would have at home, except a garage, and you can change your location every week if you want,” said Chad.

Chad grew up spending weekends with his family on a houseboat at Lake Greeson. “I just really wanted to recreate my childhood at the lake during the summer when I bought the first houseboat for my

kids,” he said. “And, in my opinion, you aren’t really at the lake unless you’re on a houseboat.” After growing up spending so much time at the lake, Chad felt there was not much to houseboat ownership that could surprise him. Rebecca, on the other hand, said she has learned a lot, including how to conserve water when they take the boat out and how to best help Chad with setting the anchor and navigation. “We know our jobs. As soon as Chad drives, I’m in the back making sure there are no boats coming or kids back there. Then when prepping the cove, I can pull the thrusters and work those while he’s tying up the boat,” Rebecca explained. “When we go back in, the houseboat community is there, ready to help us out because Chad has no room for error when docking. On either side of us, there are two boats sticking out, and he has to fit right in that little slot. The other guys are quick to help guide him in.”

Pirate Shipp calls the S-Dock at Iron Mountain Marina home, alongside several other Texarkana families and their boats. Families





from all over the state of Arkansas, and even some from as far away as Dallas, have also made S-Dock their weekend retreat. The Shipp's have found a close-knit community within the encompassment of the dock. "When you're up here, everybody is outside. Everybody is talking. So, you have a real family atmosphere, a lot of camaraderie and friendships," Chad continued. "We even like to joke that we know the people on the houseboat dock better than the people in our neighborhood." The Shipp's attribute the closeness formed between boat families to the fact that everyone is spending their time outside. "The kids are usually outside fishing, or maybe kayaking, so we're hanging out with them, talking to the kids and our neighbors," said Rebecca. The Shipp's and their lake family look out for each other; if someone is headed into town, they ask the other boaters if they need anything, from a burger to groceries. Rebecca recalled a time when neighbors noticed their generator smoking. "It was late at night, and we had no idea. Jim Bunch came by and knocked on the door



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to let us know there was a problem, and he and some of the other neighbors helped us fix it." Chad elaborated. "If I've got a problem on the boat, I can get five guys over here to help me in less than ten minutes. Everyone is always working together."

The Shipp's children, Cole (16) and Caroline (13), are both already full of stories and wonderful summertime memories of life at the lake. Caroline said, "I really like to kayak to the marina. It only takes me about five minutes to kayak over there, and I can get snacks and stuff, then kayak back." Cole, along with friend Corban Franklin, recounted a time at the lake when Cole and another friend had his fishing boat out, and it started to storm. They knew they needed to get the boat back in. Cole laughed as he said, "It's pouring down rain and we're getting drenched on the pontoon boat. So, we got the speaker and start playing *Pirates of the Caribbean* music and acting like pirates. It started lightning and looked amazing." Corban, who was with a couple of other guys back at the houseboat watching it all unfold, added, "The sky was so pretty. Imagine a movie scene; that's what it was."

Laughing, telling stories, and sharing about their favorite things to do at the lake, it's obvious Chad and Rebecca's dream of seeing their children make a lot of memories together is already coming true. You can tell they love going to the lake. They love bringing their friends with them and spending time with their dock neighbors. There isn't any doubt that owning a houseboat is more than having another toy. Living on lake time is opening doors for a lifetime of memories together. 📍



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