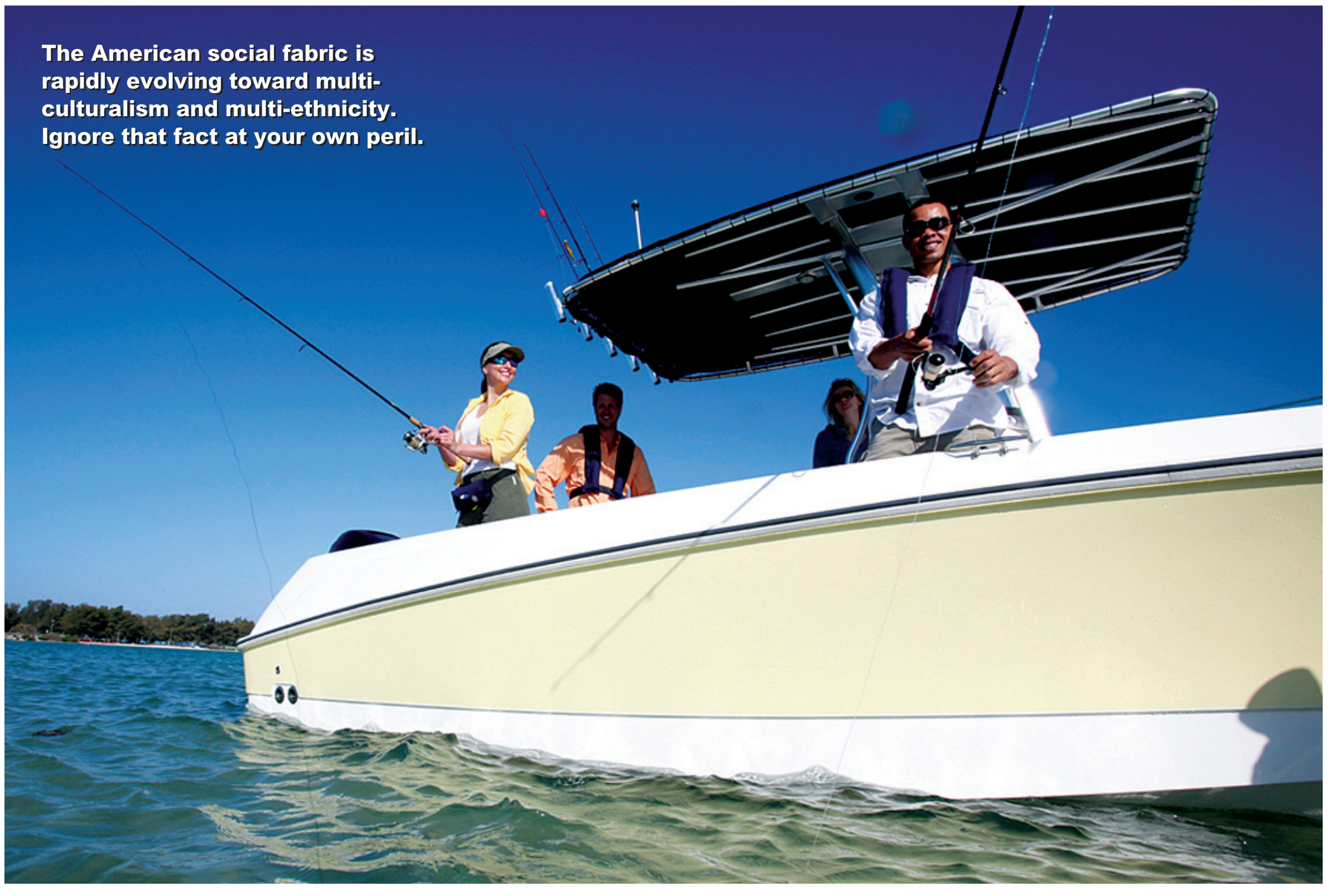
surreal. We are certainly not the first to experience Mother Nature's wrath, but I do not think any New Jersey native was prepared for what we woke up to on the morning of Oct. 30.

Over a month has now passed and much progress has been made in the cleanup and recovery. I am inspired by the strength and resilience of many of the marine business owners I have been speaking with since the storm. They are determined to pick up the pieces, wherever they are, take care of their customers and get back to business, no matter what it takes, even those facing personal losses and impossible challenges.

Like many storms before this one there will be lessons learned and changes made. We have members that are already having these discussions, making changes and planning for the future.



The American social fabric is rapidly evolving toward multi-culturalism and multi-ethnicity. Ignore that fact at your own peril.

There will be new challenges, issues and tough questions that we will all face, and we do not know what the full impacts of this storm will be. However, what I do know is that we will work together to tackle these challenges, help each other every step of the way, obtain the resources needed to rebuild as quickly as possible and, most importantly, maintain our focus on moving forward and getting boaters back on the water doing what they love.

Jack Ellis

Managing director, Info-Link

At Info-Link our primary role in the boating industry is to provide clients with fact-based market intelligence — things we are *certain* have occurred. Since it is not possible to reliably predict the future we tend not to do sales forecasting, per se. This said, we have analytical capabilities that give us unique insight into a wide range of market metrics, and based on this information we are highly optimistic about 2013.

Over the past several years boaters have understandably throttled back on major purchases. Today we are encouraged by the trends we are seeing in the market. For instance, new-boat sales have been increasing steadily for the past year, especially in certain segments, such as pontoon and saltwater fishing boats. Dealer inventories are healthier and most of the distressed inventory — both new and pre-owned — has been flushed out of the system, so boat values are back in check. It has also been at least six years since the last sales peak, and we know the average boater replaces their boat about every six years.

As we all know, boat sales are heavily influenced by the economy, and recent data indicate that the U.S. economy is moving in the right direction. Consumer confidence is up, unemployment is down and home values, which typically show a direct correlation with boat sales, are climbing.

Ultimately, the principal factor influencing major discretionary spending is whether consumers feel comfortable about their future. There is still anxiety over how Congress will handle the so-called "fiscal cliff," but assuming there are no major surprises we expect to see a continued growth in new-boat sales during 2013. Pre-owned boat sales will likely experience a slight decline due to less available inventory, which is a direct result of fewer new boats being added to the fleet over the past few years.

Meanwhile, there are still well over 10 million existing boat owners in the U.S., all of whom depend on our industry to provide the products and services necessary to keep them on the water. These boaters have also been curbing their expenses, but the average boat is now over 21 years old and more than 900,000 of them change hands each year. Many boats are reaching the point that they need to be repowered, sometimes for the second or third time, and most need at least basic equipment upgrades. With this in mind we expect to see a healthy increase in engine and equipment sales during 2013, as well.

I think most would agree that optimism breeds optimism. We as an industry have an opportunity to significantly grow our market by continuing to show consumers why this is the greatest activity in the world. Where else can you take your family and friends hostage for a day and virtually guarantee a great time? Nobody knows what tomorrow will bring, but I am certain we are now a more focused, unified industry and I, for one, am enthusiastic about our future.

Matt Gruhn

President,
Marine Retailers Association of the Americas

At a recent basketball practice a friend of mine taught his team of 8- and 9-year-olds the value of working together. Each was given two pencils. The players were asked to break the first pencil in half. Every one of them snapped. Then they were instructed to each hand the coach their second pencil. He bound them together with a rubber band and each player was then asked to try to break the bundle of pencils in half. Of course, they couldn't do it.

The illustration is one that even third- and fourth-graders can understand: As a group, or a team, you are much stronger than you are as an individual.

Yet when you look at today's society there are few examples of true teamwork or collaboration. There are protests at the capitol in Michigan. There is finger-pointing in Washington, D.C. The National Hockey League, which was to have opened its season Oct. 11, canceled at least the 2012 portion of that season two months later because it couldn't come to terms with its players' union. And there's a general lack of cooperation among leaders everywhere.

Today's economic and social environments are tough. Uncertainty and instability are preventing major purchases. Unemployment is still high. Consumer confidence is still low. I get why it's easy to want to blame someone.

But here in the marine industry I'd like to think we're better than that — that we're going to come together and create our own success rather than letting such external factors determine our fate. And there are numerous indicators that this is already happening.

Take, for instance, the upcoming American Boating Congress. Last year, through a collaborative effort, many new faces came to ABC and many more are already planning to make the 2013 ABC the most significant legislative event our industry has ever had.

Or consider the Grow Boating and Industry Growth Summit efforts. These are collaborative initiatives that focus on increasing participation in boating — something every one of us could benefit from. The former focuses on the Discover Boating marketing campaign, "Welcome to the Water," and the Marine Industry Dealer Certification program. The latter focuses on encouraging youth and increasingly diverse audiences to take part in boating, educating boaters, communicating the industry's marketing efforts and uniting to fend off unwarranted regulations that hamper our growth.

The key in all of this is that we are working together, side by side. Yes, there is some overlap in these initiatives, but what that means is that there's