

# Jimmy JOURNAL

Winter 2024



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HOLES 4 HEROES

SERVING YOUTH, FAMILIES, VETERANS & COMMUNITIES THROUGH FISHING & OUTDOOR PROGRAMS

**FISHINGFORLIFE.ORG**



# Letter From CEO TOM GOODRICH

## Partnering Together to Meet Our Community's Needs

At Fishing For Life, we are incredibly grateful for the support of our donors, volunteers, and partners who help us provide valuable programs to youth, families, veterans, and communities through fishing and outdoor activities. Our purpose is to foster personal growth, resilience, and spiritual connection through the great outdoors remains strong, but like many non-profits, we are facing funding challenges that threaten our ability to serve those who depend on us.

## Our Current Needs and Funding Gaps

Our community programming, which includes camps, mentorship programs, and lake events like Pike Fest, Badges and Bobbers, and the Amigos Lake Event, relies on donations and sponsorships. These initiatives have become vital sources of support and encouragement for participants—particularly for youth in under-served communities, veterans, and families who might not otherwise have access to such opportunities.

Unfortunately, we've encountered several shortfalls in funding that impact our ability to expand and sustain these transformative programs. Rising costs for materials, equipment, transportation, and program coordination have created unexpected challenges, and our current resources are not enough to keep up with growing demands.

## The Impact of Every Dollar Donated

Every dollar donated to Fishing For Life has a direct impact on the people we serve:

- \$25 can provide a young person with a day of fishing and mentorship at one of our camps.
- \$50 helps cover the cost of fishing equipment and safety gear for participants.
- \$100 supports our lake events, providing community members a day of connection, learning, and fun.
- \$250 goes toward sponsoring a veteran on one of our fishing or hunting retreats, offering a supportive environment to heal, connect, and find peace in nature.
- \$500-\$1,000 supports the planning and execution of large-scale events, such as our Youth Fishing Camps and Military Relationships through Recreation (R&R), where we foster skill development, personal growth, and spiritual exploration.

Your generosity allows us to continue these impactful programs, and in these challenging times, we humbly ask for your support to bridge these funding gaps.

## How You Can Help Fishing For Life in Our Time of Need

- **Make a Donation:** Every contribution, large or small, makes a difference. Whether it's a one-time donation or a monthly pledge, your support helps us continue our mission and expand our reach to those in need.
- **Sponsor a Program:** If you or your organization are interested in making a greater impact, consider sponsoring one of our events or camps. Sponsorships provide critical funding and help us keep programs accessible and affordable.
- **Share Our Mission:** Word of mouth is powerful. If you have participated in or supported our programs, share your experience with friends, family, and on social media. Let others know about the positive impact Fishing For Life has had on you or your loved ones.
- **Volunteer Your Time:** If donating financially isn't an option right now, we are always in need of dedicated volunteers to help with our events. Your time and skills are a valuable gift to our organization.
- **Connect with us** on our website to get involved or make a donation

## A Community Effort to Continue Changing Lives

At Fishing For Life, we truly believe in the transformative power of outdoor recreation, mentorship, and faith. We see this change firsthand in the lives of the youth, veterans, and families who participate in our programs. The relationships built, skills learned, and memories created would not be possible without the generosity of individuals like you.

Thank you for considering our request during this time of need. We are confident that, with your support, we can continue making a lasting, positive impact in the lives of those we serve. To make a donation, please visit our website at [FishingForLife.org](https://FishingForLife.org) or contact us directly to discuss how you can help.

Together, we can ensure that Fishing For Life remains a beacon of hope, resilience, and growth for our community.

Warmest regards,

Tom Goodrich and The Fishing For Life Team



# Donations **ANSWERED PRAYERS**

J.C. Younger Co.  
Minneapolis, MN  
(612) 411-1234

JCY  
INDUSTRIAL CHILLERS

WILSON

In our last Jimmy Journal, we had a vehicle donation request. And while we are still in search of a vehicle such as a truck or large SUV to pull our program trailers, this request was answered in ways we never would have dreamed.

Shortly after the article was out, J.C. Younger Chillers Inc., was in contact with us to fill a need we had not even published. Our old box truck, lovingly named Dino, as it is like an old dinosaur, was in need of replacement.

This story starts years ago when a relationship was forged between Fishing For Life and the J.C. Younger Chillers Corporation which began with an experiment aimed to find a solution to keep our trout pond water temperatures manageable during hot summer months.

Their commitment reached new heights when owner Sandy Younger called to donate a much-needed box truck. This truck is going to help transform the way we execute our programming. The truck now joins our fleet, enabling us to transport our program supplies in a professional and organized way, that is safe and reliable. It's a valuable asset that will help us reach even more youth and veterans, making outdoor activities more accessible and enriching our ability to share the therapeutic and recreational benefits of fishing.

J.C. Younger Corporation's impact on our mission speaks volumes, and we are immensely grateful for their ongoing support. Thank you, Sandy, and the entire J.C. Younger team, for your incredible generosity and partnership!

**A**round this time another generous donor came forward. With the many fishing events we put on spring through the fall we have always struggled with the need for pontoons that can hold a full family or group at events. This spring when the need was more prominent, we received outreach about a pontoon donation that has been a gift that keeps on giving. After reaching out through our website, a donor generously offered their pristine, two-year-old Sylvan pontoon, equipped with a 90 hp Honda engine, a live well, a Bimini top, and even sea legs. She simply wanted it to be put to good use, helping others experience the joy of the outdoors.

Just weeks later, we had the ideal event lined up—a fishing day for women veterans, hosted by our Outdoor Women for Life group on Medicine Lake. We welcomed six women veterans and two children, setting out with the goal to catch some fish, enjoy the lake, and share stories. The pontoon became not just a fishing platform but a place of connection, laughter, and meaningful exchanges among the veterans. It was a day that honored both our community's purpose and the donor's generosity, embodying the essence of Fishing For Life—bringing people together at the intersection of the Great Commission and the Great Outdoors.

If you or someone you know can support Fishing For Life by donating items such as a vehicle or a boat that is well-maintained and in great working condition, please reach out at 763-203-7979 on our website donation page, or to [laura@fishingforlife.org](mailto:laura@fishingforlife.org).







# 2024 DEEP C'S RETREAT

## FEEL THE IMPACT!



*"I wanted to share why I wanted to rededicate my life to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ this year at the Fishing For Life Deep C's Men's Fall Retreat.*

*Last year after the 2023 Men's Fall Retreat, I was moved to buy a Bible as I had never owned one before. Yes, I have read parts of the Bible, but it was always someone else's bible and not my own Bible. I decided to read my new Bible from cover to cover before the next Men's Fall Retreat. I completed the reading in August of this year. After I had completed it, I prayed about what was next. It came to me that it was time to rededicate my life to Jesus, and so I asked to be re-baptized while at Mt Carmel on Sunday, September 15th. I thank Vaughn Blackburn for doing this in Lake Carlos for me.*

~Ron Buster



*"It is amazing how one verse can be taken in so many different directions. Dwight, Dan, Mike, and Vaughn each shared a message that was based on our theme verse, John 10:10—"The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full." Does this suggest that Christians will be blessed in this life with financial riches? Does this mean we will never get sick, or get sick less than non-believers? We do know from Scripture that Jesus tells us, "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." (Matthew 19:24). My gut tells me, "Oh no, not me! God let me show you that I can be rich and still follow you whole heartedly!"*

*I also love anytime I get to fish with my son Henry and the Fall Retreat is no different. As we were driving to and from different lakes, we had a chance to discuss our theme verse and all the different views on it. We started talking about King Solomon. Solomon was described as the wisest man who ever lived and therefore, he prospered in all that he did. However, in spite of his wisdom, he fell away from the Lord and his heart was not fully devoted. If the wisest man cannot avoid the temptation that riches offer, then I have little chance. I am reminded of what Solomon wrote (I believe he wrote this after he repented) "Give me neither poverty nor riches." Lord, I pray the same thing for me and my family. "*

~Travis Busch

*"Great job on the retreat, it was well organized and enjoyable. Also, great job fishing, that is some impressive fishing."*

~Jeff Renfro

*"I wanted to thank you for a great weekend of fishing, fellowship and, of course, food!"*

~Jeff Lambert

*"It was a great retreat in wonderful surroundings with great speakers. Congrats to you on the fishing award! You certainly are the fisherman of the year!!*

*I know my friend Eric had a really good time and enjoyed (and was touched by) the speakers and the venue. We chatted about that at length and the retreat created a situation where we could talk about his life path. It would be good for him now to get involved with other Christians and I am hoping I can at least get him involved in the Deep Cs East group. He really was touched by Dan's talk."*

~Dwight Nelson

*"I had an awesome experience and Thank you for all your hard work."*

~Eric Wagstrom

*"It was a great weekend I enjoyed meeting new people. Fishing For Life did a great job!"*

~Dan Niccum





# Reel Hope

## Empowering Youth through Fishing and Outdoor Programs



In May of this year, Fishing For Life launched a new grant-funded program called Reel Hope. This initiative aims to support youth-serving organizations, ministries, churches, schools, and law enforcement in helping at-risk youth engage positively with their communities, learn new skills, and build resilience.

Reel Hope operates in three distinct phases. In phase one, participants attend a Reel 'Em In (REI) event, where they are introduced to the basic equipment needed for fishing. During this event, they restore rods, reels, and tackle, which they then keep. Phase two involves a hands-on fishing event at a local dock, pier, or shore location, where participants learn to use the equipment they received and gain guidance on finding and catching fish. Youth who complete the first two phases qualify for the final phase: a chartered boat trip to Lake Mille Lacs.

Since the program's inception through October, 49 youth have completed phase one, 23 have completed phase two, and the first charter boat launch has been successfully conducted. In August, events were held in partnership with Calvary Lutheran Church in Golden Valley, Hospitality House in Minneapolis, and the Ramsey County Sheriff's Office in Little Canada. The Mille Lacs charter trip capped off the month with great success.

In October, Fishing For Life had the privilege of hosting a two-day REI event at Coon Rapids High School as part of an elective class. Plans are underway to host similar events twice more during the winter trimester. Looking forward, the organization is building new partnerships and preparing for winter and ice fishing activities.

In addition to Reel Hope events, Fishing For Life collaborates with the cities of Lonsdale, Plymouth, and West St. Paul for their Badges & Bobbers events, as well as with the Anoka County Sheriff's Department for their Community and Sheriffs Together (CAST) event. These events provide youth with unique opportunities to learn about fishing and interact positively with firefighters, deputies, and police officers.

### PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

During one REI event for Reel Hope, a homeless student who had barely been attending school chose to participate upon learning the event would be about fishing. Volunteers taught him about fishing and had meaningful conversations with him about his life.

At a Badges & Bobbers event, a brother and sister, who had never been fishing or on a boat, got to experience both for the first time. The brother even won a prize for the largest bass!

At a Reel Hope lake event at Centennial Lakes Park in Edina, youth discovered a fishing spot near their homes that they had never visited. They were thrilled to catch hundreds of bluegills during the afternoon and continued fishing even after the event ended, staying until their parents arrived.

If you would like to get involved with the Reel Hope program or know of an organization that might be a good fit, please contact **Phil Lambert** at **763-203-8009** or **phil@fishingforlife.org**.



# Youth CAMPS

Celebrating 20 Years  
**Fishing For Life**  
2024



## Uniting Young Anglers in Faith, Friendship, and Fishing

This August, twelve young campers from across Minnesota had the experience of a lifetime at Fishing For Life's Youth Camp Fish. These budding anglers joined forces with some of Minnesota's finest mentors, including renowned bass team coaches Chad Landt & Dusty Wright and national champion collegiate angler Charlie Wright, for an immersive fishing experience unlike any other.

Throughout the camp, participants not only learned valuable fishing skills but also spent time reflecting on God's word and marveling at His creation around them. As they cast their lines, campers reeled in memories of

thrilling catches, including some impressive trophy-sized bass. Beyond fishing, the youth forged new friendships and built bonds that will carry beyond the camp itself, creating lifelong memories

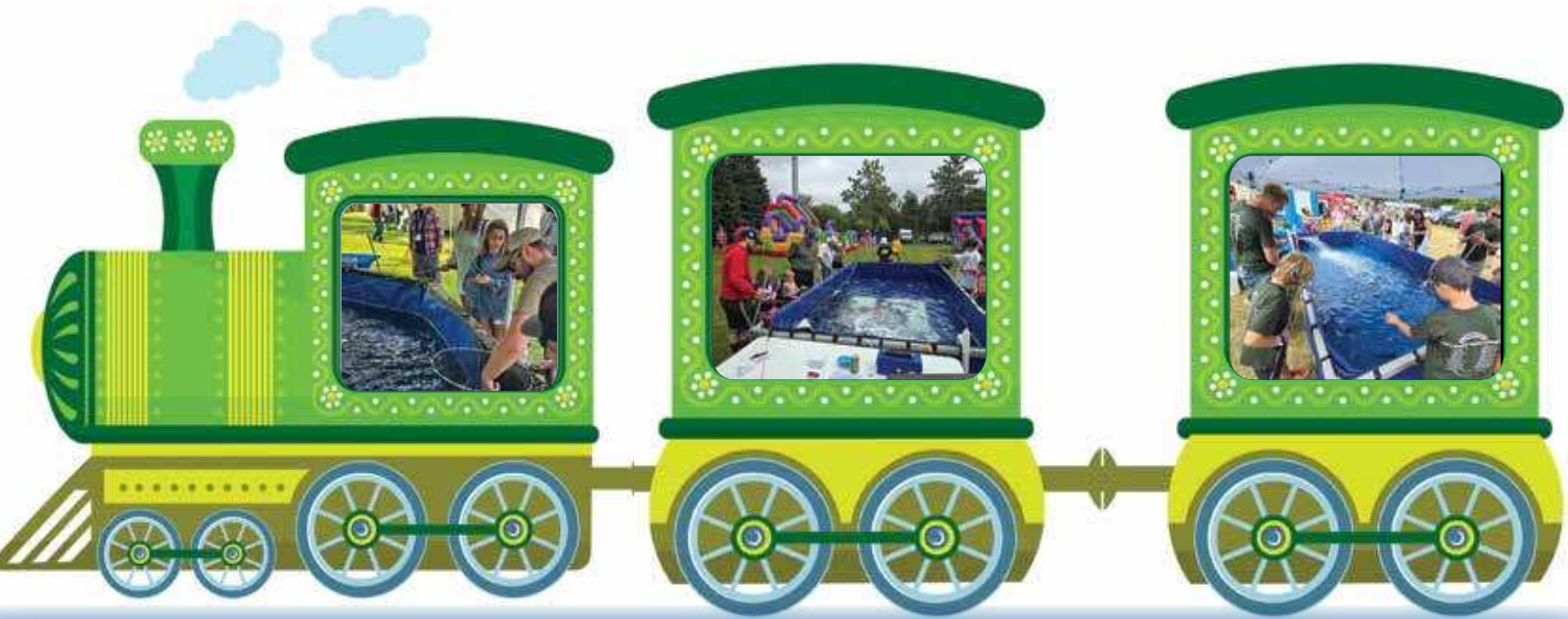
of camaraderie, faith, and adventure.

This camp, like all Fishing For Life events, aims to bring young people closer to both their faith and the outdoors. It was made possible thanks to the generous support of our sponsors: The Jake Heath Foundation and Family, Waters Edge Custom Tackle, and Ryan Saulsbury. With their support, we continue to provide meaningful experiences that encourage youth to grow in faith and skill on the water.

Thank you to everyone who helped make this incredible camp possible. We look forward to seeing these young anglers grow into future champions in faith and fishing!







# All Aboard The Trout Pond Train

By Michael Schlueter

Since our last Jimmy Journal update, we've hosted nine trout pond events, with our final event of the year at the St. Paul Ice Fishing and Winter Sports Show at the River Centre from December 6–8. Wrapping up the year with a total of 17 trout ponds!

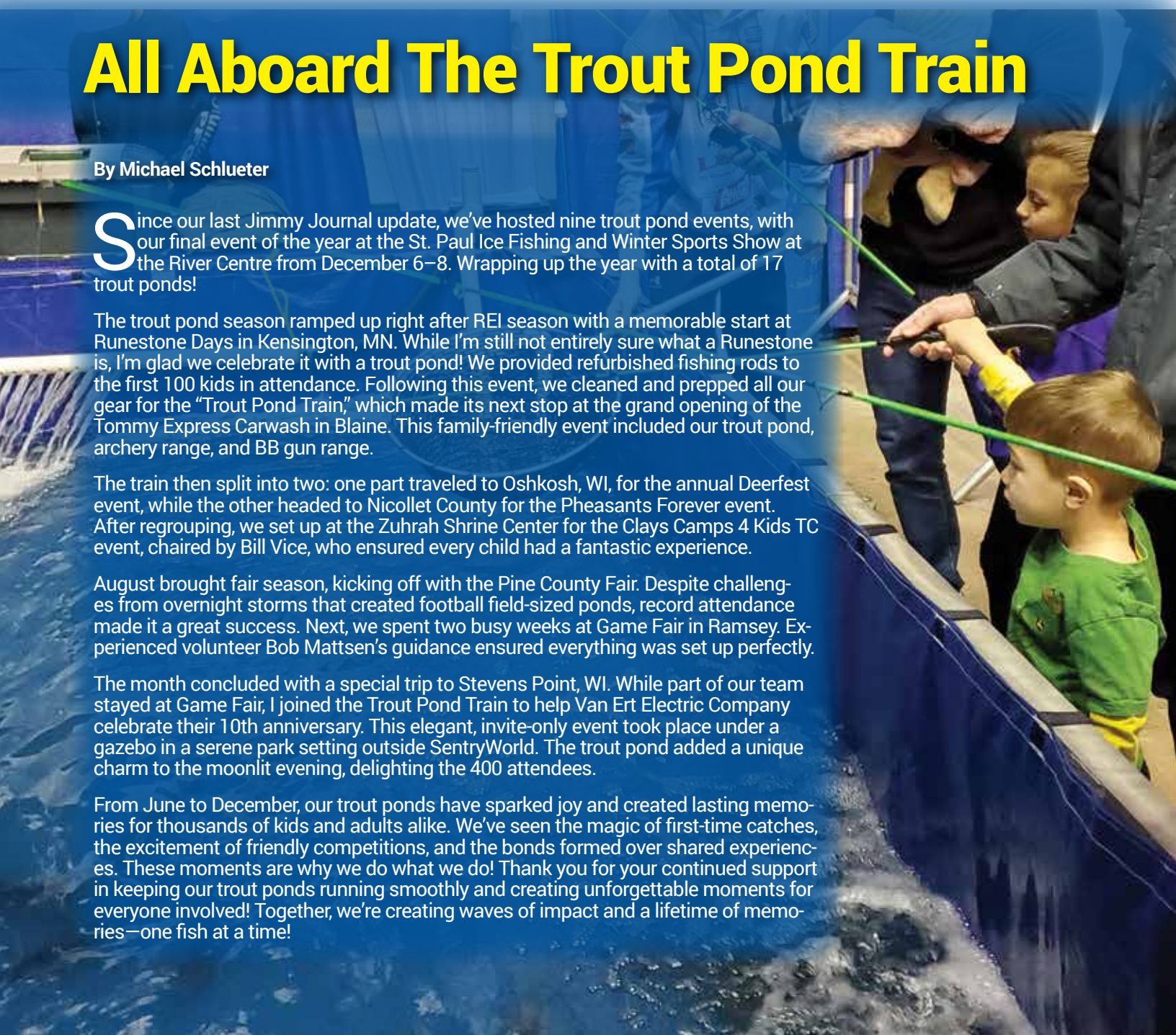
The trout pond season ramped up right after REI season with a memorable start at Runestone Days in Kensington, MN. While I'm still not entirely sure what a Runestone is, I'm glad we celebrate it with a trout pond! We provided refurbished fishing rods to the first 100 kids in attendance. Following this event, we cleaned and prepped all our gear for the "Trout Pond Train," which made its next stop at the grand opening of the Tommy Express Carwash in Blaine. This family-friendly event included our trout pond, archery range, and BB gun range.

The train then split into two: one part traveled to Oshkosh, WI, for the annual Deerfest event, while the other headed to Nicollet County for the Pheasants Forever event. After regrouping, we set up at the Zuhrah Shrine Center for the Clays Camps 4 Kids TC event, chaired by Bill Vice, who ensured every child had a fantastic experience.

August brought fair season, kicking off with the Pine County Fair. Despite challenges from overnight storms that created football field-sized ponds, record attendance made it a great success. Next, we spent two busy weeks at Game Fair in Ramsey. Experienced volunteer Bob Mattsen's guidance ensured everything was set up perfectly.

The month concluded with a special trip to Stevens Point, WI. While part of our team stayed at Game Fair, I joined the Trout Pond Train to help Van Ert Electric Company celebrate their 10th anniversary. This elegant, invite-only event took place under a gazebo in a serene park setting outside SentryWorld. The trout pond added a unique charm to the moonlit evening, delighting the 400 attendees.

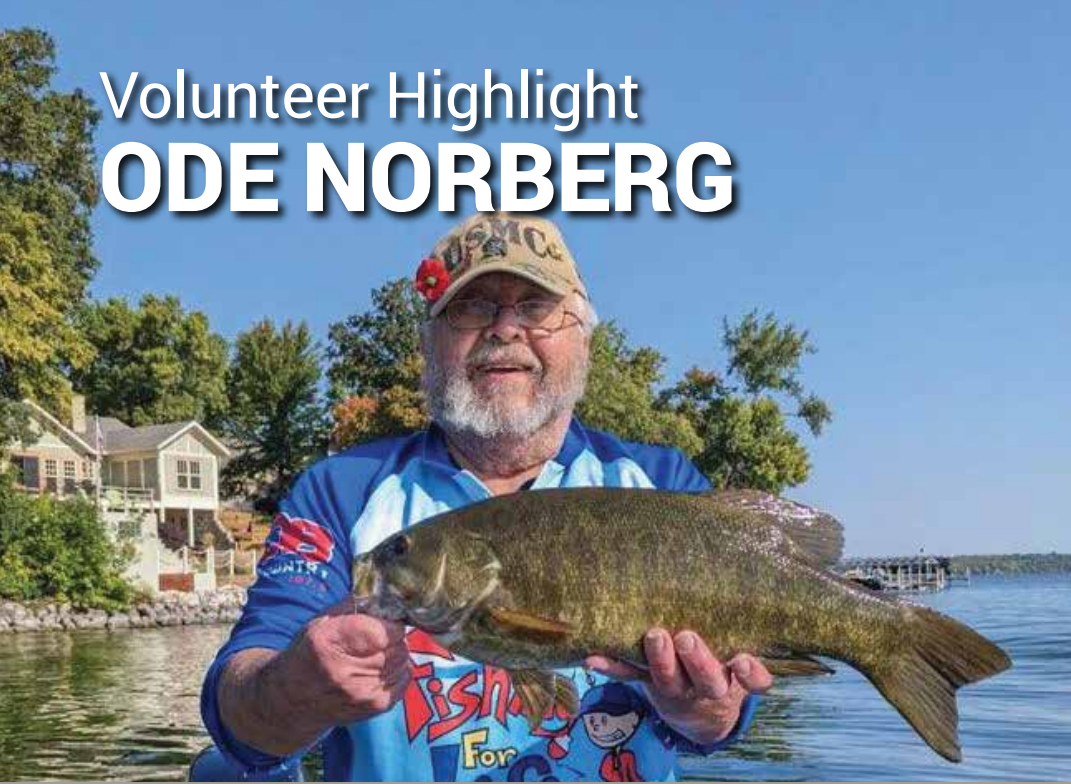
From June to December, our trout ponds have sparked joy and created lasting memories for thousands of kids and adults alike. We've seen the magic of first-time catches, the excitement of friendly competitions, and the bonds formed over shared experiences. These moments are why we do what we do! Thank you for your continued support in keeping our trout ponds running smoothly and creating unforgettable moments for everyone involved! Together, we're creating waves of impact and a lifetime of memories—one fish at a time!





# Volunteer Highlight

## ODE NORBERG



I spent 55 years as a grocer, first with Country Club Market, then with Cub after the buy out. Upon retirement, I found myself with a lot of time on my hands. I took a part-time job at Rockler Woodworking where I met some amazing woodworkers and helped customers with their projects. I developed some skills with the scroll saw and enjoyed many hours creating pieces for others.

One Sunday at church, I ran into Anoka County Sheriff, Tim Day, who I remembered from meeting at Rockler. He had just bought his dream boat and he was telling me all about it. That's when we got to talking about fishing. Knowing I dabbled in scroll saw work, he asked if I'd donate some pieces to a silent auction for Fishing For Life. That's when I met Vaughn, who invited me to the Fishing For Life banquet. I love hunting and fishing although I didn't have a boat. After meeting so many great people, I was hooked! It was then that I started volunteering at events like REI. This was all a new part of my plan for how I would spend my retirement.

I prayed often asking Jesus what I could do for Him. It wasn't until I asked, "What do YOU want me to do?," that doors began to open for me within Fishing For Life. I began helping at fishing events and with kids on pontoon boats, which became answers to my prayers. One memorable time, during a drought, we fished at the Persons with Disabilities Camp on Medicine Lake, and despite low water levels, we still caught fish! Another time, at a lake event on Lake Minnetonka, I helped a young boy catch some sunfish, and later, to his joy, he caught a bass. The conditions were not ideal and I truly felt Jesus was guiding us that day.

At one point, I was offered a boat through Fishing For Life, but through prayer, I felt the Lord telling me, "Not now." Instead, I continued to assist with shore fishing, pontoon events, and cleaning tackle at REI events. One day, I displayed 40 tackle boxes in my front yard to dry after cleaning them. This sparked many conversations with my neighbors about my involvement with FFL. It was another great opportunity to share the work I love. Nowadays, I get nervous if I don't hear from the REI coordinator for a few days. I'll contact him to make sure he has plenty for me to do. I feel the most comfortable when I'm up to my neck in used tackle. I cherish the opportunities that have been available to me by Fishing For Life!







# “Reeling Them In” Through Our REI Program

2024 has been an incredible year for Fishing For Life and our Reel 'Em In (REI) program! Through heartfelt experiences and impactful events, we've touched the lives of countless individuals in our local communities and across the country. From those who generously donated equipment to the many groups and individuals who received it, the gratitude for these blessings runs deep.

While every event this year deserves its own story, here's a snapshot of some highlights, along with volunteer attendance numbers:

- **May 23 – Osseo American Legion: 25 attendees**
- **May 30 – Cummins, Fridley: 30 attendees**
- **June 6 – Egan Companies: 50 attendees**
- **Sept 12 – Cummins, Fridley: 45 attendees**
- **Oct 16 – Premier Pontoon: 113 attendees**

This year brought exciting new opportunities for the REI program. Cummins was so inspired by the success of our spring event that they invited us back for a second event in September. Additionally, we hosted a large-scale REI event at Premier Pontoon in Big Lake, creating even more chances to put fishing gear in the hands of kids and veterans.

## BY THE NUMBERS: EQUIPMENT DISTRIBUTED

To date (January – October), we've distributed **1,433 fishing rod/reel combos** and **270 tackle boxes** to school programs, community organizations, and our internal events like camps, Badges & Bobbers, and veteran programs.

The Premier Pontoon REI event alone helped us refurbish and produce:

- **320 Rod/Reel Combos**

- **30 Tackle Boxes**
- **160 Plano/Hook Boxes**
- **50 Ice Rod/Reel Combos**
- **30 Jigging Sticks**
- **30 Tip-Ups**

## STRENGTHENING OUR MISSION

This year also brought practical upgrades to support our mission. Thanks to Mill City Paper, we've added new racking systems to better organize donated items in our semi-trailer. Additionally, J.C. Younger Company, Inc. donated a box truck to replace our beloved but broken truck, "Dino." This timely and generous contribution ensures we can continue transporting equipment efficiently.

## GRATITUDE FOR VOLUNTEERS AND GROWTH IN FAITH

None of this would be possible without the amazing volunteers who dedicate their time to making the REI program a success. These events not only provide valuable resources but also serve our ultimate goal: to lead others to a relationship with Jesus Christ.

Through Fishing For Life, I've witnessed incredible spiritual growth in others and experienced profound personal transformation. Thank you to everyone who has been part of this remarkable journey. Together, we're making a lasting impact—both on and off the water.

Here's to an even greater 2025!

## Supporting Our Communities



Earlier this year, Fishing For Life had the privilege of distributing fishing rods and reels to several outstanding community organizations! Among the groups that received equipment were Minnesota Teen Challenge, a dedicated organization in Green Bay, Wisconsin, the veteran-focused group Every Third Saturday in Minneapolis, American Legions across the state, and Legionville Camp in Brainerd.

These are just a few of the many organizations benefiting from our donations, and more continue to receive their fishing gear!

This meaningful initiative is made possible by the hard work and dedication of our incredible staff and volunteers. Through our "Reel 'Em

In" events, they carefully clean and refurbish each piece of donated equipment, preparing it to inspire a new generation of anglers. Their commitment ensures this gear is ready for the hands of those who need it most, from veterans to youth and community members eager to experience the joy of fishing.

A big thank you to everyone in our community who donated their used fishing equipment to make these efforts possible. We're especially grateful to the YMCA of the North for their collections this past April and May, and to our steadfast supporters at Joe's Sporting Goods, Cabin Fever, and Vados Bait.

Thanks to all our donors, volunteers, and supporters, we're making a lasting impact, one cast at a time. Let's continue bringing the joy of fishing to our communities!





# Hello from the **OUTDOOR WOMEN FOR LIFE (OWLS)**

**W**hat a beautiful Summer and Fall we have had! In the last 3 years the OWLs have had positive forward movement with adding new ladies and truly seeing God's work at hand. Here are the highlights from our time together:

- August was our busy month. We started with our "Beach Extravaganza" at Bakers Park. This was a great afternoon of food, conversations and time to enjoy the outdoors. A few of us got out on the water but we all enjoyed meeting and just having fun together.
- Next up, Katie Hanson and Mary Wilcox ran a booth at the Woman's Military Retreat at Mt. Olivet. Patti Murray came the next day to help Katie take some ladies fishing. Sad to say, their lake was untouchable from the shore so we ended up setting up a day on Medicine Lake in Plymouth with staff member, Mike Schlueter manning the pontoon. Katie and Patti helped where needed and it turned out to be a fabulous day talking to our veteran women. Special thanks to Mike, Mary, Katie and Patti for making this women's military event a priority.
- The OWLs also helped this year at the trout ponds at the Game Fair. We collected money and kept the fishing poles moving!

- Rachel Ramsey and Patti Murray volunteered at the State Fair Military Appreciation Day. It is a busy but fun day talking to so many veterans.
- September 14, we held our first simulcast with Priscilla Shirer. We used Cabella's conference room in Rogers and had 14 ladies attend with 6 new to Fishing For Life. Thanks to team Sara Shrode, Katie Hanson, Mary Wilcox and Patti Murray for hosting and making the simulcast run great!
- On Oct. 11th-13th we had our Fall retreat at Mt. Caramel. We had 18 attending, 6 new comers and 2 of them hearing about the retreat from Bob FM.

Devotions were by Lisa Harper from her bible study called "How Much More". We had great conversations during our devotional times, along with some time for hiking, good food, beautiful weather and crafting time. The study focused on keeping the Sabbath and teaching us that it's all about serving God... Work for 6 days and rest on the 7th, the Sabbath. Through God's guidance we can all learn to take time for God and rest our busy minds. It's just like learning a new dance step, we need to practice being in God's word to learn what He is teaching us.

- We are now trying to lay out our goals for 2025. We have a few concerts to attend along with our Fall and Winter Bible studies. We are continuing our search for God's patterns in our lives.

We would love to meet new women looking to connect. Please reach out to Patti Murray ([Patti@fishingforlife.org](mailto:Patti@fishingforlife.org)) to get connected to the Outdoor Women for Life group.

May everyone have a safe holiday season with family and friends!

In His Hands,  
Outdoor Women for Life





# The Largest Lake Superior Agate... **AND OTHER "HUGE FINDS"**

**H**ow HUGE was the agate? There is no "official" record in this case, but generally, the largest up for consideration is a 108-pound agate. It currently resides in the front room of the First National Bank of Moose Lake in the town of Moose Lake, Minnesota. It was found in the gravel pits in the surrounding area. The man who found it, named Paul Ward, was an agate collector but on that day he was just grabbing gravel to fill in some new construction. Digging deeper in, he found the enormous agate.

Paul has passed on and we are blessed that he has left behind another of his "HUGE FINDS" for us all to see. Paul left his collection of approximately 100 fishing rods to his family. Paul's grandson Nick then donated this great collection to the Owatonna Cabela's Store. Cabela's has now donated this HUGE FIND to Fishing For Life's Reel Em' In program. Paul's generosity continues to impact others, as his remarkable donation to Fishing For Life's Reel Em' In program will bring joy and benefit to hundreds in the community.



Above: Tom Goodrich and Rev. David Hoggard receiving the donation from the staff at Owatonna Cabela's. Background picture is Paul Ward, photo on the right is Paul and his grandson Nick.







## Veterans Lake of the Woods *PAY IT FORWARD 2024*

**T**his year the 2024 Lake of the Woods Pay It Forward Veteran event was even better than last year, if that's even possible. We heard so many great comments and stories of vets connecting with others and opening doors to new friendships. We are excited to be a part of that journey. A special thanks to our speakers, boat guides, sponsors and resort owners who participated. Without the generosity of these people, the event could not happen.

Every year, there is magic. The environment is created with much attention to detail, which sets the stage, but it is the veterans spending time with other veterans, however, that creates the magic. Such was the case for 80 veterans at this year's 2024 Pay It Forward Veterans Event at the Lake of the Woods.

This was the 11th Annual event which began in 2014. The purpose of Pay It Forward is to honor, recognize and celebrate all veterans with fishing, food and some guest speakers who presented about topics pertinent to veterans.

This three-night, two-day fishing extravaganza, complete with meals, is offered at no cost to veterans, thanks to the generous donations from Lake of the Woods area resorts, guides, local businesses, organizations, and individuals.

Licensed charter captains lead the fishing, and it was tremendous with most, if not all, limiting out on walleyes and saugers with a variety of pike, bass, and perch in the mix. Not only were there good numbers of walleyes caught, but some true trophies reaching lengths over 28 inches long.

This event is for all who served. Some veterans who are doing relatively well often defer opportunities like Pay It Forward so those who are "more in need" can attend. Very

considerate of course, but what we see more often than not, is a healing or perhaps a boost of life not anticipated but appreciated and enjoyed by all veterans who attend.

A variety of passionate guest speakers helped shape this event discussing topics ranging from successfully managing PTSD to overcoming obstacles and living a purposeful life. Veterans were invited to say a few words if they liked and many spoke, sharing their stories, resources that have helped them and providing testimonials. It is veterans rubbing elbows, sharing stories, hardships and camaraderie with other veterans that really creates the magic of this event.

Hall of Fame angler and outdoor communicator, Terry Tuma and his wife Karen once again greeted and fished with veterans. "Tackle Terry", as many know him, and his wife are longtime supporters of this event and have been part of it since its inception.

Midwest Outdoors TV was present and filmed the event, capturing messages and stories from veterans. The 2024 Pay It Forward episode aired around Veterans Day in November.

Coming from one of the attends, "I sure had a wonderful time up at Lake of the Woods this year. I can't believe what a terrific trip that was!! Truly a once in a lifetime event. Thanks for organizing this great event, I thoroughly enjoyed it and look forward to talking about this event with my family and friends for years." ~David Allmer

If you would like to learn more about Pay It Forward, submit an application for the 2025 event or to donate to this veterans event, check out the event website at [lakeofthewoodsmn.com/pay-it-forward](http://lakeofthewoodsmn.com/pay-it-forward).



Veterans

# World Class Catfish



**W**orld Class Catfish event has served as a retreat for wounded warriors, offering a sanctuary where healing, camaraderie, and personal growth can flourish. For veterans, the camp has provided a much-needed respite from the struggles of physical and emotional recovery. The serene environment—set along tranquil waters of the Red River in northwest Minnesota offers a sense of peace and reflection that is difficult to find in the hustle of daily life. World Class Catfish event fosters a unique space for wounded warriors to connect with others who share similar experiences, creating a brotherhood or sisterhood built on mutual understanding and support. The camp activities, including fishing and group discussions, promote mental well-being and support emotional healing. For many, World Class Catfish event is more than just a fishing trip; it's a lifeline—a place where warriors can feel empowered again, find solace in shared experiences, and take the next steps toward healing, both individually and as part of a larger community of service members who understand their journey.





# Veteran VOICES

I wanted to take a moment to express my gratitude for the wonderful experience we had at Blacks for the Veterans Rooster Roundup.

We arrived home safely and couldn't be more appreciative of the kindness and assistance provided by you and your team.

My dad had a fabulous time, and I want to extend a heartfelt thank you for making it possible for him to enjoy a true passion of his once again. He was truly humbled and appreciative of all the efforts you put into making this event happen.

Additionally I would like to offer my support for any activities you have planned in the future. I would be more than happy to help out in any way that I can.

Thank you once again for everything. It truly meant a lot to both of us, God bless. ~Billy G.

My dad served in the Navy from 1966-1970, I don't know the exact dates or all the ships he was on. I served in the national guard from May, 1991-Apr, 2016. I deployed Belgium in support of Operation Enduring Freedom in 2003-2004. I also worked as a Federal Civilian Military Technician In New Ulm, MN, Rochester, MN, and at Camp Ripley for about 11 years.



Pictured from left to right: Vaughn Blackburn, Michael Schlueter, Laura Hudson, Steve Cruikshank, Jamie Sorenson, Gary Sorenson, Ashley (Sorenson) Sutherland, Aric Sorenson, Aaron Sorenson

Fishing For Life was once again blessed by **IB Insurance Brokers of Minnesota, Inc.** and from all of those who attended their golf tournament in August. It was a beautiful day to swing the clubs and enjoy meeting new people, introducing them to Fishing For Life. This golf tournament is top notch with lunch and dinner provided, hole sponsors, an abundant silent auction, and of course beautiful greens at the Refuge Golf Course in Oak Grove.

We are honored to again be the recipient of the proceeds from this year's tournament totaling **\$34,173.69!** Thank you to Jamie and Aaron Sorenson, Gary Sorenson, and the entire IB staff who work tirelessly to put this event together and execute it at such a high level.

## Save the Date 20<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL GALA

**SAVE THE DATE for Fishing For Life's 20<sup>th</sup> Annual Gala Fundraiser.** As we celebrate our 21<sup>st</sup> year as a non-profit, we are celebrating with the "Set The Hook" Gala, **Saturday April 5, 2025.** We will return to North Heights Church where you will enjoy a wonderful meal, a large silent auction, minnow races, musical entertainment, games, live auction, and a special keynote speaker. **It's a full night of fun you don't want to miss! Tickets will be available on our website in January** and the auction items will be available for viewing and bidding the week prior to the event.





## *Fishing For Life Inducted into the Minnesota Fishing Hall of Fame!*

**W**e are beyond thrilled to announce that Fishing For Life has been officially inducted into the **Minnesota Fishing Hall of Fame!** This incredible honor, awarded Friday, September 27th, is a testament to the hard work, dedication, and heart of everyone involved in our mission to serve veterans, kids, and families through the power of fishing and outdoor experiences.

For years, Fishing For Life has aimed to make the outdoors more accessible to all, especially those who benefit most from the peace, joy, and camaraderie that nature provides. Our unique blend of programs offers fishing events, tournaments, and mentoring for youth, while also creating powerful support networks for veterans and their families. Together, these efforts have created memories, friendships, and skills that will last a lifetime.

Being recognized by the Minnesota Fishing Hall of

Fame is not just a milestone; it's a moment of reflection on the incredible journey we've been on and the partnerships that make it all possible. **A huge thank you** to our remarkable board members, dedicated staff, and countless volunteers who pour their time, energy, and passion into every event, large or small. Your commitment has turned our vision into reality.

We also extend our deepest gratitude to our community of supporters, generous sponsors, and collaborating organizations. Your contributions have provided essential resources, helped us expand our reach, and enabled us to deliver more impactful programs.

This Hall of Fame induction reinforces our commitment to growing and serving even more people in the years to come. With each cast and every fish caught, we're making waves of positive impact—one life at a time. Here's to many more years of creating lasting memories and fostering a love for the outdoors!





# HILES 4 HEROES

*Armed Forces Multi-Species Ice Tournament*



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DESIGNING YOUR FUTURE. RESTORING YOUR PAST.

**OVER \$5,000 IN  
PRIZES & GIVEAWAYS!**



Registration is now open for the 2025 Holes 4 Heroes Ice Fishing Tournament brought to you in part by Presenting Sponsor Hoffman Weber Construction.

EARLY BIRD REGISTRATION is just \$10 per hole (with a two-hole max per person) through January 1, 2025. As always veterans and active-duty service personnel and their immediate family members get their first hole FREE. Scan the QR Code to register

This tournament is a LENGTH tournament with awards for 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> place in each category.

Join us for a day on Medicine Lake, Plymouth, MN in the military tent village with ceremonies including a cadet swearing in, posting of the colors, live National Anthem, games, food for purchase, and so much more starting at 11:30 am. The tournament kicks off at 1:00 pm, but the Lube-Tech main stage will still be bustling with activity including the kid's crappie flop competition, raffles, special guest interviews, and watching the fish come in to be measured. It's an exciting day with an anticipated crowd of 800+ people.



**Medicine Lake,  
Plymouth MN**

**Feb 8th**

**Festivities – 11:30am,  
Tournament – 1pm-4pm**

**REGISTER NOW!**