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FISHINGFORLIFE.ORG

Letter From Executive Director **TOM GOODRICH**

Welcome to Fishing For Life, 2026!

I hope the changes coming your way—whether you are a participant, sponsor, or volunteer—feel exciting and encouraging. Over the past year, we've taken a close look at our processes and procedures so that every kid, every veteran, and every volunteer has an experience that is meaningful, engaging, and, by God's grace, life-changing.

Of course, we rely fully on God to do the inner work of the Spirit. But we can create excellent programming that opens doors, builds trust, and nurtures relationships. Our Step process for youths in the metro area is beginning to bear real fruit. We engage youth in wonderful activities, walk alongside them in relationship, and make sure they experience Christ in one way or another through those connections.

We are developing this same intentional pathway for our veterans. After a positive first experience, we invite them to spend extended time with us—time that becomes valuable, restorative, and rooted in real community. Through the many events we offer and the many volunteers who serve, these veterans are introduced to Christ in authentic, relational ways.

Volunteers remain the heartbeat of our ministry. They come to us through all facets of the program—some first show up at a tournament as an attendee, others step into lake events as guides and helpers. We hope they go on to participate in our Reel Hope and youth camp programs. Many volunteers eventually join our Deep C's men's groups or our women's group, the OWLs. These experiences help all of us grow in faith and ultimately deepen our relationship with Jesus, the Master of Grace.

Personally, I've been blessed with some favorite moments this past year. I returned to a couple youth camps—including Muskie Camp—and joined many veterans events including catfishing. Each outing reminded me how incredible our participants, volunteers, and supporters truly are.

Thank you for being part of this mission. We look forward to a wonderful 2026.

In Christ,

Tom Goodrich

Executive Director, Fishing For Life

FISHING FOR LIFE ANNOUNCES A RENEWED MISSION FOR THE NEXT 20 YEARS

Big news is making waves at Fishing For Life! After two decades of growth, impact, and thousands of lives touched, we are excited to share an important update—one that strengthens the very heart of who we are.

For the past 20 years, our mission has been to serve kids, families, and the community through fishing and outdoor programs. That mission guided us faithfully. It created a welcoming place where anyone could participate, where relationships could grow, and where we could earn the right to share our belief in Jesus Christ and the hope we find in Him.

This foundation has never changed. But as our ministry has expanded and our impact has deepened, we felt called to express our purpose even more clearly. After months of prayer, thoughtful discussion, and seeking God's direction, our

board unanimously agreed that it was time to refine our mission—to make it unmistakably clear, aligned, and boldly rooted in our faith.

Today, we are thrilled to announce the new mission of Fishing For Life:

“To connect people to Christ through fishing and outdoor programs.”

This refreshed mission captures the heart of everything we do—building relationships, creating unforgettable outdoor experiences, and guiding people toward a life-changing relationship with Jesus.

We are incredibly excited for this next chapter and all that God has in store. Thank you for standing with us, praying with us, and serving alongside us. Together, we will continue to change lives—one cast, one conversation, and one connection to Christ at a time.



Outdoor Women for Life Ministry

DEEP RELATIONSHIPS THROUGH NEW EXPERIENCES

The Outdoor Women for Life (OWLs) group enjoyed a wonderful year filled with fun events and meaningful connections! Kicking off summer with our first fishing outing on Lake Minnetonka, was a fun-filled day of catching bass and plenty of sunnies. Afterward, we all enjoyed lunch at Lord Fletcher's along with some beautiful weather. A big shoutout to those who guided us that day, you were amazing!

In August, we held our Beach Extravaganza Day at Baker Park. Although a storm rolled through in the morning, the rest of the day was filled with sunshine. We grilled burgers, shared delicious food, and enjoyed great conversations. We were blessed to witness a church baptism while we were there, sparking meaningful discussions about Christ.

We wrapped up our season with our Fall Retreat at Mount Carmel. God truly works in great ways—this year's retreat brought together a special group of women, studies that drew us closer, and homemade food fit for queens!

Looking ahead, we are thrilled to continue expanding our OWL offerings in 2026. The OWLs will be hosting an event every month that blends time for devotion with opportunities to learn, grow, and adventure in the fishing and outdoor world. We will

still enjoy some of our favorite gatherings—with fresh twists—such as moving our hike to the fall to soak in the vibrant colors and returning to Lake Minnetonka for another memorable day on the water. And of course, our weekend retreat will return, now with fishing included!

We're also adding exciting new experiences designed to build skills and confidence. From hands-on learning with fishing equipment to mastering the basics of baiting and casting, to pro tips for those with more experience, there will be something for everyone. We'll try our hand at ice fishing, enjoy an evening at the shooting range, explore a foraging adventure, and even celebrate a special OWLs-giving together in November.

We are equally excited for our monthly devotions, aligned with FFL's 2026 theme verse and the Deep C's chapters, as well as a women's Bible study offered in the fall. A full list of all upcoming events can be found on our calendar page at Fishingforlife.org.





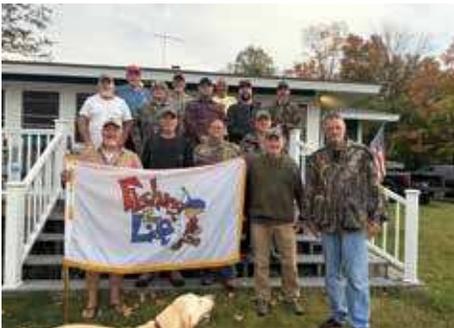
Military R&R: FALL 2025 HIGHLIGHTS



The Military R&R program wrapped up another incredible fall season filled with camaraderie, faith, and unforgettable outdoor adventures. From world-class catfishing to pheasant hunting and muskie missions, veterans found both challenge and connection through these four memorable events.

World Class Catfish – September 17–19

Sponsored by Ramy Turf, this event brought 21 participants—14 veterans and 7 boat guides—to East Grand Forks for a weekend on the Red River. Together they landed 219 catfish! Brian S. took home top honors with 945 inches total, and Dan M. reeled in the longest catch at 36 inches. The group devoured six pounds of taco meat at the taco bar provided by Fishing For Life at the Fairfield Inn, but what participants loved most was the action-packed fishing. Catfish fight hard—the fishing had to be the best part of the whole deal!



Get Your Ducks – September 29–October 1

Hosted at the R&R Hunting Lodge in Detroit Lakes and sponsored by Tom Sampair, 14 veterans enjoyed this annual hunting tradition. While the ducks proved elusive, the group made up for it by catching fish in the afternoon and shooting around 450 clay pigeons. William D. had an impressive weekend, earning both the most total inches of fish and the most clay pigeons. The event wrapped up with an inspiring message from speaker Phil Krabbe.



Marshes to Meadows – October 20

With generous support from Morrell Companies, veterans gathered at Rice Creek Hunting Preserve in Little Falls for a day of fellowship and fantastic shooting. The morning yielded 150 pheasants, followed by a hearty lunch of pheasant and wild rice soup with salad. The afternoon brought 110 mallard ducks shot over the preserve's special duck pond. Trent Morrell of Morrell Trucking Companies shared a moving faith talk. He's an amazing Christian man and loves to share his faith with veterans.



Muskie Mayhem – October 22

Our fall fishing season ended with Muskie Mayhem, an event born nearly a decade ago from muskie fisherman Brad Patterson's passion for teaching how to fish for these giants. This year, with 32 participants and 16 boat guides, the group targeted seven metro lakes: White Bear Lake, Minnetonka, Waconia, Harriet, Independence, Forest Lake, and Bald Eagle. Only one muskie—caught by Nick K. at 42 inches—made it into a boat. Also caught were a few northern pike and a largemouth bass that was caught using a 1-pound bait! Long Lake Fire Department once again provided breakfast and bag lunches for veterans and guides, fueling a day of teamwork and tradition that continues to grow each year.

Zuhrah Shrine Center Trout Pond Event: Reeling in Resilience by Kids Who Inspire Us All

On July 16, the Zuhrah Shrine Center was filled with excitement and anticipation as Fishing For Life hosted a Trout Pond event unlike any other. Twenty-five remarkable kids with disabilities, supported by 30 dedicated Zuhrah Shrine volunteers, spent the day fishing alongside 120 eager rainbow trout—creating memories that will last a lifetime.

From the first cast to the final cleaned fish heading home, it quickly became clear that this was far more than a fishing outing. It was a tribute to resilience, joy, and the extraordinary spirit of these young anglers. Despite the significant challenges many of them face, not once did they complain or suggest they couldn't participate. One of the most powerful moments came from children born without arms who, with remarkable determination, fished using only their feet. Their confidence, creativity, and courage inspired everyone present.

In addition to the Trout Pond, the Zuhrah Shriners offered a full slate of other activities as part of their annual event, giving participants even more opportunities to connect, explore, and enjoy the day together. The grounds were buzzing with energy, fun, and a sense of shared purpose.

The day also included a shared lunch of grilled brats and hamburgers, a simple meal that became a meaningful moment of community. Laughter, encouragement, and stories filled the air, reminding everyone how transformative it can be when compassion, courage, and the outdoors come together.

Fishing For Life is honored to partner with organizations like the Zuhrah Shrine Center to bring hope, joy, and unforgettable experiences through fishing. Events like this remind us why we do what we do.



Serving Those Who Serve: Fishing For Life Hosts IMF Military Chaplains on Lake Johanna

Every three years, Fishing For Life receives a unique and deeply meaningful opportunity: serving the IMF military chaplains of the United States. These men and women—connected through our governing church body, the International Ministerial Fellowship (IMF)—spend their careers pouring into the lives of soldiers and their families. When their annual conference rotates to Minnesota, we get the honor of pouring back into them.

This year, that blessing came to life on the waters of Lake Johanna.

Under sunny skies and calm water, Fishing For Life volunteers welcomed military chaplains and their family members for a day designed to help them breathe, laugh, connect, and enjoy God's creation. Thanks to generous guides, steady boats, and plenty of fishing know-how, chaplains had the chance to relax with a rod in hand—some experienced anglers, some brand-new to the sport—but all grateful for the peaceful break.

Of course, no Fishing For Life event is complete without great food and warm hospitality. Between bites and boat rides, stories were shared, friendships formed, and hearts encouraged. Many chaplains expressed how much it meant to step away from the weight of their responsibilities and simply enjoy a day on the lake with their families.

For us, the privilege is truly ours. These chaplains serve on the front lines of spiritual care in the military—walking with soldiers through deployment, grief, stress, marriages, faith questions, and everything in between. Their work is tireless, often heavy, and incredibly important. Being able to bless them, even for one day, is a joy and an honor.

Fishing For Life is grateful for every guide, volunteer, donor, and staff member who made this experience possible. And to the chaplains: thank you for your service, your compassion, and your faithful ministry. We look forward to welcoming you back the next time the conference comes to Minnesota.



Paul Marzahn, IMF president and Scott Hume. IMF Chaplain



Golfing with a Mission

Fishing For Life was once again blessed in 2025 by the generosity of IB Insurance Brokers of Minnesota, Inc. and everyone who took part in their annual August golf tournament. This year's event delivered another incredible day on the greens with perfect weather, great conversations, and a wonderful chance to introduce new supporters to the mission of Fishing For Life.

As always, the tournament was first-class. Participants enjoyed lunch and dinner, engaging hole sponsors, an impressive silent auction, and the stunning landscape of the Refuge Golf Course in Oak Grove. We are deeply honored to be the beneficiary of this year's proceeds, totaling **\$32,135.67**, a tremendous blessing to our programs.

A heartfelt thank-you to Jamie and Aaron Sorenson, Gary Sorenson, and the entire IB Insurance Brokers team for their tireless work in planning and executing this outstanding event. Their commitment and excellence continue to make a meaningful impact year after year.



Pictured from left to right: Brita and Gary Sorenson, Tom Goodrich, Jamie Sorenson, and Aric Sorenson



No Child Left Inside Grant Brings Inclusive Fishing to Life Across Minnesota

Fishing For Life is excited to celebrate the impact of the **No Child Left Inside (NCLI) DNR grant**, awarded to support our **Adapted Angling for All** proposal. Thanks to this funding, we have successfully expanded accessible fishing opportunities for youth with disabilities across Minnesota—bringing our vision of inclusive outdoor recreation to life.

NCLI support enabled the retrofit of a pontoon boat to be fully wheelchair accessible, allowing youth with limited mobility to participate safely and confidently on the water. This adapted pontoon debuted at **Bass Camp** and has since been used in several additional events and fishing opportunities statewide. The results have been powerful.

Even as the grant period concludes, the impact continues. The retrofitted pontoon is now a lasting resource that will allow Fishing For Life to offer adapted fishing experiences for years to come—supported through community partnerships, ongoing fundraising, and the dedication of our volunteer network.

A special thank-you goes to **Chad Landt** and **Camp Director Ryan Strugar** for the countless hours they invested in bringing this project from concept to reality. We also extend our sincere appreciation to the generous donor who gifted the pontoon and helped launch this initiative. It is truly inspiring to see generosity and vision come together to create lasting opportunities for youth across Minnesota.

The photo shown above is from our **1st Annual Neurodiverse Fishing Event**, a wonderful example of the joy, inclusion, and opportunity this initiative has created for youth across Minnesota.

Veteran's Corner:

Reclaiming Life—The Comeback of Army Ranger Nate Zolin

Through years of pain, surgeries, and setbacks, Army Ranger veteran Nate Zolin fought to reclaim his health, his sense of community, and his employable status—showing what determination, hope, and being surrounded by a community of veteran believers can accomplish.

After serving seven years in the U.S. Army, including two tours in Iraq, Nate returned home with serious injuries that led to 16 surgeries—five on his hip—and constant nerve pain. PTSD made things even harder, and in 2019, the VA determined he was 100% unemployable.

For years, he relied on pain medication to get through each day, but over time he decided he wanted something different. His doctors offered him a spinal stimulator, about which he said “It’s been amazing ever since, and I’d recommend it to any veteran dealing with nerve pain—it’s a great option instead of pain meds.”

About two years ago, he also began infusion therapy for his PTSD, which helped improve his mental well-being. Nate said, “I didn’t even enjoy going fishing anymore... I’d isolate myself inside the house. Even my service dog had gained weight because we didn’t go to the dog park anymore—but now he’s back to a good weight, and I’m doing good. I enjoy fishing, going out, going on walks.”

During that same period, Nate was also fighting to earn back his employable status through the VA—a five-year effort that finally paid off in late 2024 when the VA restored it, marking a major milestone in his journey!

Another meaningful chapter in his recovery began when Nate discovered Fishing for Life. While struggling with PTSD, he heard about the Holes 4 Heroes event on Facebook. Though he could barely walk after hip surgery, the FFL team made sure he could participate—driving him to his spot on a 4-wheeler and helping him get set up. That day sparked new friendships and opened a door to a community that reminded him of the brotherhood he’d had in the military.

Since then, he’s attended the Pay It Forward Event, joined the Deep C’s Men’s Ministry West group, and found encouragement to stay grounded in his faith. “A lot of my journey was turning to God,” he said. “The ministries at FFL have helped keep me focused on that.” Now, he shares his experience with other veterans, encouraging them to attend FFL events and find that same sense of connection to God and

camaraderie with other veterans.

With his health improved, his sense of brotherhood renewed, and his employable status restored, Nate hopes to return to work—ideally at the VA—as an Advanced Medical Support Assistant helping other veterans navigate their care.

From combat to comeback, Nate’s story is one of resilience, faith, and brotherhood. Fishing for Life is proud to be part of his journey of recovery and reconnection.



Army Ranger veteran Nate Zolin, enjoying a day out fishing.

A Weekend of Renewal

Stories of Faith at the Fishing For Life Retreat

Every year, the Fishing For Life Retreat offers a place of peace and enthusiastic fishing—a quiet reset from the noise of everyday life. But this year, the stillness of the Northwoods and the ripples in the waves held something even more powerful: transformation. Two men, each on a deeply personal journey, felt God stirring their hearts in ways they never expected. What unfolded became a beautiful reminder of why this retreat exists—to connect people to Christ through fellowship, conversation, and the gentle tug of the Holy Spirit.



“WOULD YOU BE INTERESTED IN BEING BAPTIZED?” – CHASE’S STORY

When Chase arrived at the retreat, he thought he was simply stepping into another good weekend: fishing, fellowship, and time outdoors. But God had something more in mind.

“I was talking to Bob,” Chase shared, “and he mentioned baptism. He asked if I had ever been baptized. I said no. Then he asked if I’d be interested.”

The question hung in the air. Was he ready? Chase paused, thought for a moment, and said yes.

Bob immediately texted Vaughn, and together they encouraged Chase to take this step of faith. Even with excitement rising in his heart, Chase admits he was nervous.

“I really wanted to grow closer to God, but I was kind of nervous to stand up in front of everyone. But in the end, I stood up and did it.”

The retreat chapel—simple, peaceful, and full of warmth—became the beginning of Chase’s baptism. Friends surrounded him, prayed for him, and walked with him down to the lake where the waters waited. Sunlight danced on the surface as he stepped in, a powerful symbol of the new life God was opening before him.

“Afterwards, I was really happy,” Chase said. “I felt spiritually reborn.”

His smile said the rest.

“I NEEDED MY LIFE TO CHANGE” – PAT’S TESTIMONY

For Pat, the retreat marked not just a moment of personal commitment, but the continuation of a calling.

“I wanted my life to be better,” he said, “and a heavenly voice said, Then you MUST be better.”

Pat knew transformation required choice—and he made his choice clear.

“There is a saying: You will be a product of what and who you learn with. I choose Jesus Christ.”

Pat embraced the Word, embraced change, and embraced purpose. He describes himself as teachable—willing to listen, learn, and grow. Through that willingness, God began steering his heart toward ministry.

“As 2025 winds down,” Pat shared, “I am very excited to bring forth the word of God to all ears that can hear and all hearts and souls open to God’s word in 2026.”

His enthusiasm radiates. His purpose is clear. His mission is underway.

Save the Date!

Fishing For Life's 21st Annual Gala
A NIGHT AT THE LAKE

Saturday, April 18th

North Heights Lutheran Church in Arden Hills

Presenting Sponsor



Get ready to drop anchor with **Presenting Sponsor Edge Home Finance** for Fishing For Life's 21st Annual Gala – *A Night at the Lake!* Join us on **Saturday, April 18th** at **North Heights Lutheran Church in Arden Hills** for an unforgettable evening celebrating our programming, fellowship, and the joy of fishing. **Enjoy live music, a delicious meal, exciting games, and both silent and live auctions packed with amazing prizes** – all while supporting Fishing For Life's mission to impact youth, veterans, and families through the great outdoors.

Tickets go on sale in February at **fishingforlife.org**—mark your calendar and get ready to reel in a night of fun, laughter, and purpose!

If you'd like to donate an item to support the event, please check out our **Amazon Registry** by searching "**Fishing For Life 2026 Gala**" under **Gift List**. Thank you for helping make this night one to remember!

FISHING FOR LIFE WELCOMES NEW TEAM MEMBERS!

Fishing For Life is growing – and we're thrilled to introduce three incredible new team members who are helping us expand our impact and live out our mission to connect people to Christ through fishing and outdoor programs!



Bobby Lyons – Reel Hope and Metro Camp Program Coordinator

Please join us in welcoming **Bobby Lyons**, who has joined our team to help continue the growth of our **Reel Hope** program. Bobby is also leading the development of the next phase of programming – launching **Metro Camps**

that focus on fishing and faith, giving young people continued opportunities to grow in Christ and in community.

Bobby brings a long history of nonprofit leadership, particularly in youth and mentoring programs. He's a passionate bass fisherman with a wealth of experience, enthusiasm, with a heart for ministry. Bobby and his wife have six adult children (ages 25–38) and seven grandchildren. His joy, energy, and love for fishing make him a wonderful addition to our Fishing For Life family!



Mike Bull – Trout Pond and REI Program Coordinator

We're also excited to welcome **Mike Bull**, who stepped into a key role following the loss of our dear friend **Michael Schlueter** in June. Mike has been a longtime volunteer with FFL and quickly made his mark on the team. He's already successfully led

five **trout ponds**, creating countless smiles and memorable fish stories along the way!

Mike has also built strong relationships with volunteers and donors through our **Reel 'Em In** program – you can read more about his work and passion on our Reel 'Em In page. Mike has been married for two years, has seven children and three granddaughters, and serves on the Board of Directors for the Lyndale Neighborhood Association. His leadership and servant heart continue to bless our ministry and community.



Sammy Fleagle – Administrative Coordinator and Volunteer Engagement

Last but certainly not least, please welcome **Sammy Fleagle**, who has joined us to provide much-needed **administrative support**. Sammy has jumped right in, managing our database system, registrations, and volunteer coordination. Her organization and attention to detail have already helped set us up for success this year—and into 2026!

Sammy recently got married and has two energetic dogs. She loves canoeing in the BWCA and sings on the worship team at her church. Her joyful spirit and dedication are already making a big impact behind the scenes.

Together, Bobby, Mike, and Sammy bring fresh energy, experience, and passion to Fishing For Life. We're so grateful for how God continues to grow our team – and we can't wait to see all that He will do through them!

Be Part of Something Big— Join the Fishing For Life Volunteer Team!

READY TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE, HAVE FUN, AND BE PART OF AN INCREDIBLE COMMUNITY? JUMP IN WITH US! FISHING FOR LIFE VOLUNTEERS BRING ENERGY, HEART, AND TEAMWORK TO EVERY EVENT—CHANGING LIVES ONE CAST AT A TIME. IF YOU'VE BEEN LOOKING FOR A PLACE TO BELONG AND MAKE AN IMPACT, THIS IS IT!

Gear Up With Us—Volunteer Training Dates:

- **February 11** – Optional CPR & First Aid Training (boost your skills, not required)
- **February 19 & March 19** – Youth Volunteer Guide Trainings at Cabela's Bass Pro Shop

Whether you're a pro with a rod or brand new to outdoor programs, we'll train you, equip you, and welcome you into a team that feels like family.

Ready to join the team?

Click on the "Volunteer" Fish on our website at **FishingForLife.org** to sign up to volunteer. OR contact Sammy at **sammy@fishingforlife.org** or **763-200-7603**.

Let's make a difference—together!



Reel 'Em In is more than a program; it is a connection point. We connect generous donors with people who long to experience the joy of fishing, creating new opportunities, new memories, and new stories on the water.

The journey of every rod and reel begins with generosity. People give for many reasons: a deep love of fishing, a desire to support our ministry, or simply because they want their equipment to make a difference. Some donors are downsizing or upgrading their gear, while others give as a meaningful way to honor the memory of a loved one who shared their passion for fishing. Reel 'Em In accepts donations at three drop-off locations across the metro area year-round, and donors from outside the state often ship their items. Every donation carries a story, a legacy, and the potential to create new experiences for someone else.

Once equipment is donated, it enters a process of care and restoration. Corporate partners, dedicated volunteers, and Fishing For Life staff come together in refurbishing events that combine teamwork with service to the ministry. Through these efforts, we may be reminded of Romans 8:28: "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose." Each gift has purpose, and through this work, we participate in His plan.

Once the equipment is ready, it is placed into the hands of those who will use it to experience the outdoors — nonprofit organizations, schools, veterans, kids, community groups, and our Fishing For Life programs. While much of our work focuses on Minnesota, we also distribute gear nationwide to organizations and individuals whose goals align with ours. One example is Hope Fest 2025 in Xenia, Ohio, where Reel 'Em In provided 31 rods and reels to support their recovery community's Youth Fishing Tournament. As Stephanie from Hope Spot shared,

"Fishing For Life's generous donation of fishing poles made an incredible impact at HOPEFEST 2025. Their support helped us host our largest youth fishing tournament to date, welcoming 72 young people and their families for a day of fun, connection, and community. We are deeply grateful for their partnership and the joy it brought to so many. Already planning for next year and the partnership with Fishing For Life." Her words reflect what we see so often — that each gift carries purpose, helping youth, veterans, and communities connect with God's creation through the joy of fishing.

Since being hired in mid-July, I have been responsible for coordinating the receipt and distribution of donations for the Reel 'Em In program, learning to carefully steward each gift from donor to recipient. From my first event on September 15th to coordinating pickups from drop-off sites and individual donors, I have witnessed how generosity and volunteer dedication make a meaningful impact. During this period, the program has placed nearly 300 rod-and-reel combos and 14 fully loaded tackle boxes into the hands of individuals and organizations, supporting multiple events. These numbers do not include the Fishing for Life programs using REI rods and reels. We are on track to again reach over 1000 fishing rod combos donated back into the community.

We are deeply grateful to all the donors, volunteers, and staff whose generosity and dedication make the Reel 'Em In program possible. Every contribution, every hour spent refurbishing equipment, and every act of service ensures that this ministry continues to bless youth, veterans, and communities across Minnesota and beyond. It is through this collective effort that we can create meaningful experiences, strengthen connections, and share the joy of fishing with so many who might not otherwise have the opportunity.

Celebrating Our Volunteers: Champions of Skill, Service, and Faith

At Fishing For Life, our volunteers are far more than instructors—they are the heartbeat of our mission. Whether teaching a child to cast for the first time or guiding participants through specialized fishing and hunting camps, these leaders consistently go above and beyond. Their service extends well past outdoor instruction. They actively model the core qualities that define Fishing For Life, especially our call to put God first in all we do. Their presence at every camp builds not only skills and confidence, but also character, integrity, and a Christ-centered perspective that leaves lasting impact.



Skip Swanson

As our camps have grown more specialized—from catfish and sturgeon to turkey, bass, musky, and more—so has our incredible team of volunteers. Our programs fill quickly, with many returning campers, because our guides make each experience fun, successful, educational, and rooted in faith. Below, a few of our volunteers share why they continue to serve:

Skip Swanson, “the catfish whisperer”

“Showing the love of Christ through catfishing—breaking down barriers through fishing and God’s creation—is what brings me to Fishing For Life.”



Jeffery Eddleston & Camper

Jeffery Eddleston, catfish and sturgeon guide

“God has blessed me with opportunity through his provision of skills and equipment not only to do something I love, but to bless others who are new to fishing and to witnessing Christ’s love. I love that Fishing for Life creates events where it’s okay to talk about how God has placed us there not only for the purpose of catching fish but to realize and experience his glory.”



Charles Warga & Camper

Charles Warga, turkey call maker, self-taught outdoorsman and youth pastor

“I believe hunting provides one of the best platforms for mentoring and teaching our youth. Not only are kids in need of spending time in God’s creation enjoying hunting and the outdoors; but rarely does everything go as planned. It’s through these difficulties and challenging moments that we can better teach how Jesus would handle stress, adversities and persecution.”

Luke Heath, bass and musky guide and partner in the Jake Heath Bass Camp using his brother’s legacy to help plant the seed



Luke Heath & Camper

for Christ- *“The outdoors is a place that gives me peace and helps me connect with God. If I can share that with kids so they may see God in the outdoors like I do, maybe I’ve done something right. Fishing and hunting teach life lessons to kids that they can carry with them in life and become a better person. Determination, patience, hard work to achieve a task, and the idea to never give up.”*



Charlie Wright & Camper

Charlie Wright, five-time national collegiate bass champion and former Fishing For Life camper

“Anyone who spends time outdoors would say they feel closer to God surrounded by His creations. Being able to take people out especially kids help plant the seed and show them the beauty of God’s creations. I feel bad for people who spend their whole lives living inside and don’t get to experience the outdoors.”

A successful camp thrives on many skills and abilities, but the most important is a heart dedicated to Christ and a willingness to share His love. Fishing For Life extends a heartfelt thank-you to every volunteer who says yes to God’s call and yes to serving others.



Reel Hope

Empowering Youth through
Fishing and Outdoor Programs



Romans 15:13 – *“May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.”*

In May of 2024, Fishing for Life launched a new grant-funded program called Reel Hope, which is designed to come alongside youth serving organizations, ministries, churches, schools, and law enforcement to help underserved and at-risk youth engage positively with their communities, learn new skills, and build resilience. Our goal with this program is to connect with youth in hard-to-reach environments such as single-parent homes and out-of-home placement and give them an opportunity for many outdoor experiences they may not otherwise get. FFL has the opportunity through multiple events to build lasting relationships with these youth and provide deeper outdoor experiences. Above all, we get to point them to Christ and the hope that is only found in Him!

Reel Hope is one program in three phases. In the first phase, participants attend a Reel 'Em In workshop, or REI for short. At this event, participants are taught about the basics and benefits of fishing, and our volunteers will also work with them to restore and refurbish rods, reels, and tackle which

they will get to keep. They then bring this equipment with them to the second phase, which is a fishing event at a local dock, pier, or shore location near their community. Throughout this event they will be taught how to use their equipment, and they will also receive instruction on where to find fish and how to catch them. Youth who participate in the first two phases become eligible for the third and final phase, which is fishing from a boat. The phase three event this year was a charter boat fishing trip on Mille Lacs Lake in August.

In just a year and a half, Reel Hope has already had an incredible impact! The program started in May 2024, but the first official event didn't take place until August of that year, so the following statistics are from August 2024 to August 2025:

- Partnered with **25 organizations**
- Planned and executed **40 events**
- Served **622 youth** (185 at Reel Em In events, 437 at lake events)
- Gave away **9,402 pieces of tackle, 306 rod/reel combos, 300 tackleboxes, and 1,112 lures**
- Worked with **179 volunteers**
- Spent **774 volunteer hours**

Highlights

There were 8 Reel Hope events that took place in July and August of this year. Here are some of the highlights:

In July we had the privilege of working with a youth organization in Monticello to facilitate 2 events involving 7 of their students. During the lake event on the Mississippi River, one of the participants cast his topwater bait next to a bridge piling and hooked into a nice 17-inch smallmouth. As he was reeling it in, we saw no less than 10 more bass the same size following it in!

In August we were honored to work with a troop from American Heritage Girls for the first two events of the Reel Hope program, and a select few also joined us for the third event on Mille Lacs Lake.

We worked with Revival Mentoring in St. Paul to do a set of events for 9 of their students. They also joined us for the Mille Lacs Lake event.

The phase three Reel Hope event this year was a day camp event at Father Hennepin State Park and a charter boat launch through McQuoid's on Lake Mille Lacs, for which we had 21 participants including children, youth, and adults.

We are grateful to have once again had the opportunity to partner with the Anoka County Sheriff's Office for the annual Community and Sheriffs Together event on Lake George in Oak Grove. We had 55 total participants this year and were once again blessed with great weather!

If you would like to get involved with the Reel Hope program or if you know of an organization that could be a good fit, please get in contact with Phil Lambert at 763-203-8009, phil@fishingforlife.org OR Bobby Lyons at 763-203-7431, Bobby@fishingforlife.org.



Holes 4 Heroes

Armed Forces Multi-Species Ice Tournament

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

REGISTER NOW

Get ready—registration is officially open for the **2026 Holes 4 Heroes Ice Fishing Tournament!** Snag your spot early with **Early Bird Registration** at just **\$10 per hole** (two-hole max per person) now through **January 9, 2026**. And as always, **veterans, active-duty service members, and their immediate families receive their first hole FREE**. Scan the QR code and jump in!

This year's event is a **weight tournament** with awards for 1st and 2nd place in each category.

Join us for an unforgettable day on **Medicine Lake in Plymouth, MN**. The military tent village comes alive at **11:30 AM** with a cadet swearing-in, posting of the colors, the National Anthem, food vendors, games, and more. The tournament begins at **1:00 PM**, and tent city will be buzzing with the **Kids' Crappie Flop**, raffles, special guest interviews, and all the excitement of fish being weighed live.

Don't miss Fishing For Life's biggest ice fishing celebration of the season – **secure your holes today!**



**Medicine Lake,
Plymouth MN**

Feb 7th

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



REGISTER NOW!