

Let's Go Fishing Show big hit again, continues today

by Brent Feeney, Sports Writer
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COLLINSVILLE – There's no doubt that sport is a great pastime throughout the Riverbender region.

While there's plenty of love for sports like baseball, football, basketball, soccer, hockey and other types of sports, there's also much interest in outdoor sports, especially hunting and fishing.

Fishing is a particularly popular activity in the area, and with winter weather setting in, **Collinsville's Gateway Center hosted its annual Let's Go Fishing Show** over the weekend, an event that attracted boat dealers, fishing companies, resorts from throughout the region and even from Canada and even several regional high school and college bass fishing teams promoting themselves.

“This is the 23rd year of the Let's Go Fishing Show here at the Gateway Center,” said show **producer Jamie Lane**. “It's a show that's focused on fishing, so we have fishing-focused vendors that have fishing gear, rods, reels, tackle and accessories, we have boat dealers with fishing boats, so we not only have more than 120 vendors to shop and visit, we also have all kinds of other exciting things to see and do, especially kids activities and games, so it's a family-friendly event.

“We also have some live (demonstrations) on casting, fly-tying, and we have kids games and educational displays and we also have 30 free seminars; we have some really big-name experts here like Todd Faircloth and Britt Chapman here this year, and we have just a good list of experts and pros.”

Among those represented at the show included the **Steel City Bassmasters Club**, a **Granite City-based organization** affiliated with the Bass Anglers Sportsman Society, a national organization which promotes bass fishing and tournaments, including the Bassmasters tournament that crowns the sport's top angler each year.

“I've been fishing since I was very, very young kid,” said **Steel City Bassmasters founder and president Larry Heagy**, “going on vacations with my parents. Back in 1989, I formed the Steel City Bassmasters, so I'm the founding member and the only president we've had; this is my 28th year as president.

“We have a good group; we've got 120-plus members, and every year, we participate in the Let's Go Fishing Show in the kids' corner; we help out the convention center with entertaining the kids, handing out prizes and letting them do a little bit of fishing (in a tank set up near the group's table). It's a lot of fun.”

Considering that the Illinois High School Association's 2015 bass fishing champion is Ethan Jones of Glen Carbon's Father McGivney, Heagy believes that interest in bass fishing has increased in the area. “The high school-level fishermen, well, I wish that would have been around when I was in high school,” Heagy said. “I certainly would have pursued that.

“It's allowing these kids to get out; it gets them off the couch playing video games and gets them outdoors, breathing fresh air and fishing and learning something about the outdoors.”

The show runs through Sunday evening.



