



Get 'em hooked: Two Rivers Family Fishing Fair teaches children the value of the outdoors

by Cory Davenport, Contributing Writer
June 11 2016 7:52 AM



GRAFTON - For 25 years, the **Two Rivers Fishing Fair** has taught kids the fun of fishing and the entertainment value of their own backyards.

Starting in 1991 at **Pere Marquette State Park**, the fair features several games, informative booths, and prizes geared to fostering an interest in Illinois's natural resources in the children who live near the confluence of the Illinois and Mississippi Rivers. For the quarter century milestone, the fishing fair featured nearly 30 stations for families to enjoy, employed the efforts of more than 250 volunteers and informed and entertained more than 2,000 children.

Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) Urban Fishing Coordinator for Regions IV and V Scott Isringhausen said he helped create the event as a way to get Illinois kids excited about the possibilities of the outdoors.

"My goal is to get kids involved in fishing and the outdoors," he said. "If they start doing it when they are young, I hope they will continue to do it as they grow up. It's an activity that can keep families together by giving them something to do."

Children who registered at the fair and visited seven booths were awarded a small tackle box full of goodies, a Frisbee or a small rod and reel set. Isringhausen said several of the challenges awarded larger prizes such as bigger tackle boxes, better rods and reels and cricket cages to keep bait.

To show off the variety of fish which can be caught in waterways across Illinois, a 4,000 gallon fishing tank was brought to the event and loaded with 30 species of fish ranging from bluegill to gar.



Wayne Rosenthal, Director of the IDNR, said he was grateful to the sponsors of the event, which came from across Jersey County as well as the surrounding region.

"This event takes care of our future young fishermen," Rosenthal said. "They are the future of our outdoors. This event ultimately is people helping people."

Penny Chandler was one of those people helping people. She came as a volunteer from the **Catholic Teenage Organization** sponsored by **Holy Ghost Catholic Church in Jerseyville**. She was staffing a casting contest in which children tried to cast a hook in a small opening in front of a fish painted on a wooden backing.

"I've never been able to do it," she admitted. "But my brother (**Pat Tallman**) can do it no problem."

A Carrollton 7-year-old named **Ryleigh Alexander** was trying her best, and enlisted the help of her father, **Darwin Alexander**, to get the job done.



Another informative display for the children and adults alike to enjoy was a reproduction of a **White Pirogue** boat used by Lewis and Clark on their transamerican journey.

Brad Winn, site manager for the **Lewis and Clark Historic Site in Hartford** said the boat was not too far removed from fishing.

"They had to fish everyday to provide the energy needed to keep that man-powered boat moving," Winn said. "We have fish stories from them involving 150lb catfish and catching upwards of 150 fish a day."

Several other activities including an archery contest, a wildlife display from the **Illinois Conservation Police Lodge** and **Camo the Clown**. The event was free to the public thanks to its sponsors.