

Families reel in fun at annual fishing derby

by Madelaine Gerard, Staff Writer
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EDWARDSVILLE – It was a perfect morning to cast out a line, relax by the lake and try to catch some fish at the **Edwardsville Parks and Recreation’s annual Fishing Derby**.

The derby, which occurred this Saturday morning at **Leclaire Lake**, allowed the entire family to enjoy one of Edwardsville's beautiful parks and unique fishing areas.

Hayley Verheyen, Assistant Recreation Coordinator for the Edwardsville Parks and Recreation Department, took charge as the event's leader and ensured that the children and their families were here having the time of their lives.

"We have around 45 kids participating," Verheyen said, "Walgreens sent out some volunteers to help us, which is awesome. It's definitely a great community event. It gets kids outside and gets them fishing."

Participants fifteen and younger were invited to the park to try to catch the largest and the most fish in the annual derby.

"It's been great. Its great to see a kid who has never fished before fall in love with fishing," she said. "Their parents then try to figure out what rods and reels are the best because they've fallen in love with a new sport so it's really great to see."

A representative from the **Illinois Department of Natural Resources** was on hand at the derby to give the participants a crash course in fishing and water safety. He also mentioned how to catch fish and safely return them to the lake.

At the end of the derby, the first 50 participants received free cherry limeades courtesy of **Sonic Drive In**. The top three competitors received trophies courtesy of **B.J.'s Printables** for the most fish caught and for the biggest fish.

Prizes for the most fish caught went to:

1st Place- Emerson Chambers (7.5 inches and 50 fish)

2nd Place- Lauren Meyers (7.5 inches and 28 fish)

3rd Place- Audrey Rutherford (7.75 inches)

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"A huge thank you to our generous sponsors who make this event possible: Illinois Department of Natural Resources for coming out to the park and going over some fishing tips with the kids, to BJ's Printable for donating trophies for the winners, to Walgreens for providing volunteers and goodie bag items and Sonic for bringing Cherry Limeades!"