

Fishing Fair returns to Marquette State Park

by Lee Keck

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Fishing enthusiasts and aspiring anglers will have an opportunity to celebrate their favorite sport during the 28th Annual Two Rivers Family Fishing Fair scheduled for June 9 at Pere Marquette State Park near Grafton.

The special one-day fishing extravaganza, sponsored by the Two Rivers National Wildlife Refuge, Pere Marquette State Park and the Illinois Department of Natural Resources, is among the largest of Illinois' Free Fishing Days celebrations. The Family Fishing Fair has been tagged as state's "Flagship" event for this special weekend celebrating this popular recreational sport.

As in the past, the annual fair features numerous "hands-on" demonstration stations. Each station is intended to teach fairgoers a specific fishing skill.

The series of demonstration stations include instruction on such fishing-related activities as knot tying, fish identification, fish cleaning and casting. Though designed primarily for youngsters, anglers of all ages are encouraged to attend and participate in the free event.

After participating in a minimum of demonstration stations, each youth will receive a prize and have an opportunity to catch a trout from the special portable trout pond.

In fact, the trout pond has always been one of the most popular attractions at the fair. The trout always seem to be biting and there are usually several big fish in the pond.

Event organizers are also excited about the many attractions in this year's fair lineup.

Along with many of the past favorites, the fair will feature several new stations. In addition, those attending will see a number of returning favorites like Camo the Clown and the new and improved bluegill pond.

Other returning favorites may include a bowfishing station, virtual reality fishing machine and a 4,000 gallon aquarium stocked with native fish species from the Illinois River.

Folks can look into the large aquarium and feel like they are under water, looking eye-to-eye with the fish. Experts will demonstrate the motion and action of fishing lures in the water, to help folks understand why fish are attracted to them.

The aquarium will also serve as a site for numerous fishing seminars throughout the day. The seminar lineup includes a number of fishing experts and professional anglers. In addition, the aquarium will also be the site for various other demonstrations.

Getting families outdoors to have fun together is what the Two Rivers Family Fishing Fair is all about. This free festival at Pere Marquette happens each year because volunteers provide the manpower and sponsors provide the funding to make it happen.

In fact, volunteers are still needed to assist with the event. For more information, contact Pere Marquette State park at (618) 786-3323.

On June 9, children can experience the fun of fishing and spending time outdoors thanks to this event's many sponsors and more than 225 volunteers.

More than 3,500 people including 1,600 children attend the Two Rivers Family Fishing Fair each year. The event features some 25 activity stations at which youth can learn more about fishing and the outdoors. Kids can also enjoy the 4,000-gallon aquarium and visits by Camo the Clown.

The Two Rivers Family Fishing Fair is expected to attract many outdoor enthusiasts who hope to learn more about fishing, or just enjoy a fun-filled day.

Admission to the fair is free and no fishing license is required. The activities get underway at 10 a.m. and continue until 4 p.m. Pere Marquette State Park is located five miles north of Grafton on the Great River Road (Route 100).

For additional information about the event, contact Pere Marquette State Park at (618) 786-3323.