


 Guest Column

Shane Wilson, *Founder and CEO of Fishing's Future*;
David Rodgers, *Communications Manager, Recreational Boating & Fishing Foundation*

Fishing's Future and RBFF Join Forces



RECREATIONAL
BOATING & FISHING
FOUNDATION

For years, fishing has been passed down from one generation to the next, but as more Americans move to cities, age out of the sport, and as technology vies for their attention, the need for a stronger national effort to increase participation in the sport is necessary. Since 2007, Fishing's Future has been serving the recreational fishing industry through educational efforts to reconnect families and fishing. Now, the Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation (RBFF) and Fishing's Future have joined forces to expand the educational, on-the-water experiences to youth and families in urban areas through the new Take Me Fishing™ First Catch Centers.

The stated goal of Fishing's Future is to "reestablish fishing as the #1 family-oriented pastime in America." To that end, there are now more than 70 chapters scattered across 20 states.

Fishing's Future is dedicated to strengthening family bonds, reconnecting kids to nature, teaching environmental stewardship, and increasing participation in recreational angling. Working with RBFF on this Take Me Fishing First Catch Center is an opportunity to further impact the next generation of anglers and boaters.

Fishing's Future was selected to pilot the Take Me Fishing First Catch Centers because of their measurable and replicable program that has

proven to produce results.

As RBFF president and CEO Frank Peterson put it, "What we're providing with these First Catch Centers will go beyond just one 'feel-good' fishing experience. "The anglers that are taught and developed through the First Catch Centers will participate for years to come, leading to more revenue for the industry and contributing to much-needed conservation funding."

Fishing's Future will open eight Take Me Fishing First Catch Centers in the Houston, Dallas, and New Jersey areas, as well as work with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service's Laguna Atascosa National Wildlife Refuge in Texas and local fish hatcheries. Another Take Me Fishing First Catch Center pilot is also underway with the Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission.

The First Catch Centers will be a true "boots on the ground" effort from RBFF, Fishing's Future, and the Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission. RBFF will provide the marketing expertise, branding, and promotion, and these two organizations will implement quality fishing and boating education programs. It's a means to help create the next generation of anglers and boaters.

Fishing's Future is gaining brand recognition within the recreational fishing community. The model to promote fishing through education using

local volunteers who are certified through a state's Aquatic Education program and who have passed a background check is showing unparalleled results. Fishing's Future provides the curriculum, equipment, guidance, and support to make each chapter successful within a new community. The organization has found that a grassroots approach of using local knowledge and reputation to gain insight and pathways to new opportunities and communities is the key to success.

The Fishing's Future model of bringing aquatic and fishing education to the masses is highly effective and companies like RBFF, Cabela's Outdoor Fund, Seaguar, Pure Fishing, Zebco, Eagle Claw, AFTCO, Plano, Magic Bait, Comal Tackle, Temple Fork Outfitters, SunSect, Bass Pro Shops, Academy, Tenkara USA, BUFF, and numerous others are all supporting the effort. These companies are investing in their future as they realize the ripples of interest created by Fishing's Future through the educational programs delivered, produces waves of new customers with an interest in fishing and a desire to spend time outdoors with their family.

Sponsorship opportunities are available and essential if the program is to grow. Contact Shane Wilson (shane@fishingsfuture.org) with Fishing's Future, or Rachel Piacenza (rpiacenza@rbff.org) with RBFF for more information. ■

Fishing's Future is dedicated to strengthening family bonds, reconnecting kids to nature, teaching environmental stewardship, and increasing participation in recreational angling. Working with RBFF on this Take Me Fishing First Catch Center is an opportunity to further impact the next generation of anglers and boaters.