Sunshine Skies, Kids and REALLY BIG FISH FUN!
East Aurora Fish & Game 2017 Teach-Me-To-Fish Event
128 Kids; 254 in Attendance; 12 Volunteers; Fun in the Outdoors through Fishing!

June 3, 2017 - East Aurora, NY: The event was set to begin at 10:00 a.m., but with the sunshine skies, excited kids and adults started to arrive at 9:15! Even the volunteers were not on hand yet.

It didn't matter, the EAFG volunteer team turned up the clock and the learning stations came to life early. The only thing adults can do when kids want to fish!

By 9:45, the sunshine moved to light up the pond. The fish must have been waiting for the kids because in the next hour, 25 kids brought more than 50 fish to the "Lunker Pool" weigh station. Some of the fish were true lunkers! Thru the day, kids caught fish from every part of the 12-foot deep pond and brought about 200 fish to shore.

A smiling seven-year old Emma Miller started things off with her 18-1/2" bass that tipped the scales at more than 4-pounds. Nine-year old Joe Russo was next on his way to a 7-fish morning, but the big fish catches were just starting. Gabe Miller brought in a 21" bass that nearly tipped the scales at 6-pounds, then followed that up with a 9-1/4" black crappie. What a day for Gabe!

Turn this thing and look! It comes back! Cool!

There was 4, 5 and 6-pound lunker bass lurking in the EAFG Lunker Pool.

Michael Telban was not far behind, his 9-1/4" crappie and 18" bass came in a few minutes later. The kids were remarkable in handling these monster fish. Colden Ball enjoyed a pleasant 7-fish morning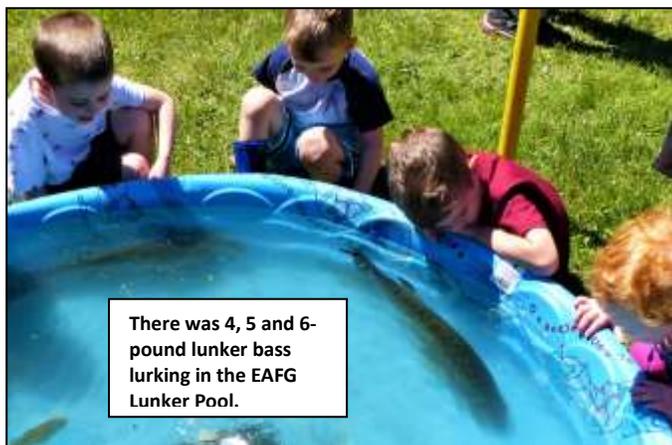. Just a few minutes before the horn sounded for the end of fishing at 12 noon, Ryan Miller 10-years old, landed another whopper fish, a 17-1/4" bass.

Thanks to Jim Smith, Tom Cimato and many other on-site EAFG volunteers at the pond, the free Bait & Tackle Loan Station provided fishing expertise and free nightcrawler bait complete with how-to-rig lessons. Weekley's Bait Shop in Hamburg donated 1,500 worms for the kids to enjoy the day.

Everyone discovered that a sunny sky can help fish decide they are hungry. The results were obvious, happy kids with an ear to ear smile!

Lots of smaller fish came in too, but for the kids that did not land a fish, the lunker pool provided an aerated viewing platform for all the kids, big and little. All were amazed by the large assortment of swimming fish on display. At the end of the fishing session, the lunker pool fish were returned to catch another day. Kids helped with the release process, a

Jim Smith and EAFG staff provided tackle, bait and advice on fishing at the pond.

lesson in conservation.

As the kids were registered, Susan Gould, Mary Hubbard, Carl Leas and the EAFG volunteer staff provided directions for the learning stations and Sahlen's hot-dog cookout to follow at lunchtime.

As families registered, a 40-page slide show indoors provided an overview of fishing WNY.

From the family of the late Norby Antonik, a regular volunteer for the first 12 years of this annual EAFG event, each youth received a Mardi-Gras "fish bead" necklace as a special gift.

Fun was had by nearly 300 kids/adult attendees, as they learn about conservation, including "Catch & Release" at East Aurora Fish and Game Club pond.

Part of the Teach-Me-To-Fish experience for each child and their family is visiting the learning stations to discover the "how-to" of good fishing knots, proper casting techniques, plastic bait rigging, learning about the EAFG-NRA Sportfest from President Conrad Boyle, and Lyme disease awareness and prevention.

Bob Carlson and Russ Johnson demonstrated one-on-one outdoor fun as kids learned the strong, easy-to-tie, Palomar knot.

At the casting station, Mark Dichert helped kids learn how to cast a line with step-by-step lessons with a spin-cast rig. In no time, kids showed their ability to learn by tossing their plugs into hula-hoop targets 30 to 60 feet away.

At the Plastic Bait station, Dieter Voss from the West Falls Conservation Club, shared fishing skill magic by teaching kids how-to rig artificial plastic baits, including plastic worms and jig tails. Kids were captivated with the look and live feel of the soft baits and were able to take home one or two plastic baits of their choice. Happiness can be described as a wiggly plastic worm.

There was fun giggling from some kids, some kids tried to touch a fish and ran for mom or dad. Others just watched and helped pass the buckets back and forth to the pond. It was a great day for everyone! Fish too.

MCs for the event included Jim Smith, Jr., who announced our automatic rod-reel winners for the biggest fish, smallest fish and most fish of the day; former Rock97 DJ, Dieter Voss, who received help from the kids to raffle off 56 rods/reels, Mary Hubbard to discuss the EAFG NRA Sportfest, Susan Gould to

share free gifts from Erie County Sheriff Tim Howard, and Chairman Dave Barus to detail Lyme disease awareness.

All the participants were treated to a Sahlen's hot dog lunch complete with healthy watermelon, fresh salads, cheesy noodles, healthy beverages, and other goodies, thanks to the cooking team of John Borngraber and Henry "Butch" Betz, under the careful management of chef extraordinaire Elaine Borngraber, Celeste Kubisty and several other EAFG volunteers.

Everyone took home fishing maps, a NYSDEC Guide to Beginner Fishing, fishing handouts, tackle, and other special prizes from the "EAFG Tackle Treasure Chest." Everyone, kids and adults, were BIG WINNERS!

Former Rock-97 DJ, Dieter Voss, receives help from the kids in the free rod/reel raffle drawing.

This special youth outreach event was sponsored and coordinated by the East Aurora Fish & Game Club with special thanks to Eileen Borngraber, Sahlen's Meat Packing, Cabela's, the Norby Antonik Foundation, Erie County Federation of Sportsmen, Weekley's Bait, East Aurora Moose Lodge 370 and 12 EAFG dedicated volunteers who donated their time to help our youth and their families learn more about the outdoors through the fun of fishing! Thanks EAFG/Moose TEAM! Dave Barus, 2017 Program Chairperson