

Pittsburgh Urban Kids Summer Fishing Program Proposal

Program Name: **Let's Go Fishing! Program**

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Situation:

Families in the urban area of Pittsburgh are denied access to the inner-city lakes and to sport fishing. Poor maintenance of the cities lakes and the Pennsylvania fish commission refusal to stock them has effected inner-city youth participating in sport fishing. Another effect that has devastating consequences for urban family is limited opportunity for building relations, strengthening bonds and passing on lessons learned. Fishing is a powerful tool for mentoring the at-risk youths.

Program background:

Pancakes and Jesus Ministry started in Homewood North the City of Pittsburgh Public Housing Community. A neighborhood of three hundred homes situated on a hilltop on Brushton Avenue, with limited recreation for the at- risk youth and no readily accessible public transportation for the working residents. These are dominantly female head of households with the youth displaying low academic scores and poor school attendance.

Brief Program Description

The Let's Go Fishing! program grew out of the Ministering to families in the Homewood North Community. The first year we provided a weekly hot breakfast on Saturday morning with activities to strengthen reading skills and comprehension. The subsequent seven years we met twice a month for breakfast, reading exercises, guest speakers and special projects related to issues in the community. The first fishing Derby attendance in 2004 was by invitation from a Conway Sportsmen Club Member. Forty youth and ten adults attended the first fishing derby with the ministry. Pancakes and Jesus remained there for ten years and became involved in every aspect of the Homewood North community life.

The Let's Go Fishing! Program is positioning itself to reach those at- risk youth whose family has experienced the effects of several generations of poverty. We believe that utilizing sport fishing as a tool to reach our young is the best tool for calming the spirit and encouraging them to dream big dreams.

Let's Go Fishing! Program Derby

This is an annual fishing competition provided to at-risk urban youth by the Conway Sportsmen Club in Zelienople, Butler County, Pennsylvania. Local church youth groups, youth from Small Seed Foundation, The Community Intensive Supervision Program CISP, and The Light of Life Homeless Mothers Shelter have all attended derbies in the past. This July 2017 the East End Cooperative Ministry youth participated in a mini fishing summer camp. One hundred and ten youth spent time perfecting fishing skills and their understanding of the aquatic life. It is our desire to expand the fishing mini-camp to other Pittsburgh area.

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Brief Derby description

Time is invested in teaching fishing skills as most of the youth and adults in attendance have little or no experience fishing. Prizes are awarded to individuals for specific categories of fishing accomplishment. Life skill issues are discussed and their relationship to the family and community. Participants receive a hot meal and prizes for their participation. The last five years the derby has drawn two hundred plus youth per year.

Outcomes

The youth learned fundamental fishing skills and sharpen their communication skills. Social skills are exercised and new relationships formed with other attendees.

Program Goal

The program is motivated by families seeking to strengthen their interpersonal relationship with sibling through fishing. The experience gained from the preparation, execution and follow through of the annual fishing derby has convinced us that sport fishing can fill the relational void affecting the urban family. The void is demonstrated through irresponsible behavior, dependence on social welfare systems, violence in the home and community. Young adults struggle with maturity, confusion, as they waste time indulging in video games.

The Myth

The myth that city kids don't fish is only a myth, a destructive lie that the urban community has bought into. Fishing is only a tool but it has many attributes that enable our youth to mature into productive adults. Sport fishing lacks the violence associated with other socially acceptable sports. Has the violence in the sporting arena made us more tolerable to violence in the community?

Mentorship Goals

In the City of Pittsburgh mentors are few in the black community. There are three generations of African American males who have never fished nor had the opportunity to experience fishing. These males represent a sampling of the mentors needed to bring stability to family life in the African American community. The Pennsylvania Fish Commission relies on large number of participants in Allegheny County Park facilities for success. This reliance comes at the expense of families in the inner city being denied local fishing opportunities. We have excluded a tool like fishing, a source for sharing the lessons of our past, and encouraging our youth for a brighter future from our arsenal.

The Let's Go Fishing! Program has met professional African Americans who have debunked the achievement myths and desire to share their experience with Pittsburgh at-risk youth.

- Dr. Simms, an anesthesiologist at UPMC and a fly fisherman stated there is no easier way to mentor a youth than fishing.
- William Carry Allen, a school science teacher and bass fisherman takes his students to lake Carnegie to fish. He believes the aquatic of fishing to be a great educational value.

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- Brothers Ronny and Lacy Woodruff, a real estate investor and retired state employee, drives from Harrisburg to Pittsburgh to fish with his brother. Through fishing the honor their bond enjoyed as youth living in East Liberty and fishing at Lake Carnegie.
- Edward Caldwell Jr. is a IT Release Manager working for Highmark, a major health insurance provider in Pittsburgh. In July of 2017, he and his family assisted in the launch of the mini fishing camp extending the opportunity for many at-risk youths. The youth gained quality fishing instructions from several seasoned anglers in a very successful outing.

The one important factor worth mentioning is these are African American fishermen and positive role models within the community.

Teaching fishing skills is the beginning of dependence between the mentor and the mentee and the potential launch of a trusting lifelong relationship.

Program Objective

To reestablish youth sport fishing in the City of Pittsburgh communities by utilizing the existing inner-city lakes for the building up of our youth and contributing to the stabilization of the city's families. Restoring the lakes will allow for the additional exposure of youth to the outdoors, and bring a balance to time spent with electronic entertainment. It will strengthen family relationships and encourage our youth to achieve, rather than accepting the status quo.

Neighborhood interactions will improve as youth gather at the lakes for special events or spend time on their own at the lakes fishing.

The lakes will provide a resource for additional programming and contact with at-risk youth in the community. The Pittsburgh police will have an immediate point of contact with youth in the East End neighborhoods. The lake will provide an opportunity for various community organizations to volunteer for beautification projects for Lake Carnegie and the entire Highland Park picnic area.

Brief Outreach Description

The Let's Go Fishing! Program continue to outreach to the local community churches, community centers and youth programs but will expand its outreach to community centers and programs assisting families and at-risk youth to promote our fishing skills and environmental education programs. The Let's Go Fishing! Program will utilize the local Pittsburgh Cable Station PCTV 21 to inform Pittsburgh residents of fishing programs and other family-based activities. Billboards and commercial media air-time may also be utilized to inform families of fishing opportunities. The Let's Go Fishing! Program has a goal to provide fishing tackle, bait and transport volunteers via a van to the lakes. This vehicle is planned to be parked alongside the lake edge several days a week, six hours a day to distribute PFBC loaner fishing equipment.

Outcome of outreach:

- Families will have a safe place to be introduced to fishing and explore the wonders of nature.
- Local community centers will have opportunity to present aquatic programs to families in the community.

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- The lakes will provide potential beautification projects that enhance the park and solidify the families in eight east end neighborhoods.
- The lakes are a point of contact for the community and police and at-risk youth.
- Cable television and potential billboards for expanding the participation for additional fishing skills programs.
- The production of a cable program by youth to address the concerns of the youth-driven community.

Future Program

The Let's Go Fishing! Program would take the best practices learned from Lake Carnegie to the other inner-city lakes. Fishing derbies will remain a draw for at-risk youth in the city and will be planned for the end and beginning of each school year. Family fun fishing events will also be emphasized as it has been our experience that young parents love to assist their children with fishing activity. The Let's Go Fishing! Program will also explore other fishing activities such as fly-fishing and catch & release bass fishing. Special outings can also be planned for a trip to Lake Erie in northwestern Pennsylvania and other special sport fishing sites in the state.

Media Outreach Project

The media outreach has a great potential as it is community based and the resources of retired media professionals is rich and available. The media team will have the ability to examine the issues that impact the at-risk youth and offer viable solutions. Issues such as "Dumbing it down" that effect the African American student, or the "High School to Prison pipeline" that impact the entire community. There can be additional examinations of the "Parenting Issues" affecting the home that impacts at-risk student's ability to excel in the classroom. The Let's Go Fishing! Program also desires to provide a quarterly breakfast to discuss career opportunities and to connect students to professional mentors.

Brief description:

- The Let's Go Fishing! Program will invite additional experienced and professional anglers to contribute to our gatherings.
- During the summer 2017 the Pittsburgh Fly Fishing Association met at Lake Carnegie on Thursday evenings. The Pittsburgh Fly Fishing Association is also seeking at-risk youth to participate in their program. We have plans to work with the Pittsburgh Fly Fisherman Association to provide instruction from May to September for more program opportunities for the at-risk youth in the Pittsburgh communities.

The Let's Go Fishing! Program attendance at Lake Carnegie, three days a week and involvement in the Pittsburgh Fly Fishing Association will provide more program opportunities for the at-risk youth in the community.

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Outcome:

- Four days of instruction from Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission Certified Fishing Skill instructors
- Families have an opportunity to strengthen their bond in a natural environment
- Sport fishing is a vehicle that enables single mothers to bond with their youth at an early age
- Broaden the young anglers view of sports fishing and a aquatic environment
- Stronger neighborhoods and a local city sporting association will guarantee local fishing gatherings
- The community can develop a singularly focused media outlet for youth to creatively express their concerns

The Let's Go Fishing! Program will target at-risk youth from the age of five years old to adult. We recognize the value of adults of all ages, particularly females with fishing experience to promote the program objectives. We desire to create opportunities for families to interact at lake side fishing in a community setting. We will provide valuable life-changing opportunities for the three generations of adults who had no previous experience fishing, but desire to learn these new skills.

Program outcomes:

- Purchasing additional volume of PA fishing license to support the Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission
- The increased fishing activity in the city lakes provide more community interaction
- The increase purchase of fishing equipment by new anglers provide economic growth in the community
- An increased confidence in at-risk youth and adults fishing for the first time with the ability to instruct others.

Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission Fishing Skills Instructor Training:

The PFBC conducted training to teach fishing skills and provide information on how to preserve the aquatic resources. There were twenty-six "Let's Go Fishing! Program" volunteers who attended this state certification class held on Thursday, November 30, 2017 at the Eastminster Presbyterian Church. Future certification classes will be scheduled as needed for more volunteers when Lake Carnegie is stocked with largemouth bass, catfish and bluegills.

Outcomes

- Increase the outreach to adults which will increase our capacity to reach additional at-risk youth.
- The stocking of Lake Carnegie with largemouth bass, catfish and bluegills will indicate agreement between state and city governments and the local community that fishing is a valuable skill to be introduced to our at-risk youth

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Opportunity to create a local fishing association

Inner City residents must form a fishing organization to insure future stability of the lakes and to monitor the local representative understanding of their importance and insure funding is available to maintain them. Families in the urban area cannot rely on county organizations assistance. The organization were contacted early in 2017 by the Let's Go Fishing! Program team for assistance with stocking Lake Carnegie with fish. We never received a response from these outside county organizations. Most county organizations have a lot of influence with the PFBC because of a large volunteer membership base. Our urban families and volunteers must do the same to insure our at-risk youth will enjoy inner city fishing for future generations.

Brief Description:

The fishing association can seek funding from foundations and private donors to expand beautification projects, promote and expand our outreach. Monitor young angler's activity in schools and communities and make the information available to the community at large. Socialization can be achieved by yearly award banquets recognizing youth and family achievement in the community. This socialization event will also be used as an annual fundraiser.

Outcomes:

- An abundant availability of volunteers to adopt the lakes and parks to make them enjoyable for everyone in the community
- To become educated about funding for urban at-risk youth's recreational needs and to hold local representatives accountable when urban at-risk youth resources are not used properly
- Build a social network to protect and expand recreational funding to the lakes.

The following audiences that will be reached by the Let's Go Fishing! Program expansion: Utilizing word of mouth among community church youth groups, community centers and outreach programs to promote the life changing qualities fishing skills provide.

- The monthly fishing programming on Pittsburgh Cable PCT TV21 will expand the outreach exponentially.
- The possible use of billboard adds placed strategically within the community promoting youth fishing will promote additional participation in the Let's Go Fishing! Program events.
- Change current trend of media promotions to showcase photos of African American children enjoying the sport of fishing.

Frequency of events/programs

Two fishing derbies per year in the month of June and September where the events will each plan to host one hundred youth. The youth will be registered to the events using the PA Mentored Youth Fishing licenses. The Let's Go Fishing! Program events will be scheduled to start at 9am and conclude by 4pm. The Let's Go Fishing! Program events will plan to provide a lunch and seek motivational guest speakers and provide some type of awards at the conclusion.

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The PFBC Fishing Tackle Loaner Program will be scheduled in three weekly timeframes at the lake to assist young anglers with equipment in a proposed "Let's Go Fishing! Program" van equipped with required fishing gear and select bait. We envision the weekly times the van to be at the lake an average of five hours per day on Monday, Wednesday and Saturday from June to September based on volunteer availability and weather conditions. All other loaner program activity will require scheduling via an on-call (412-444-8313) volunteer basis at agreed upon location and time as equipment is available.