

# SOMETHING'S FISHY!

Official Newsletter for 4-H Youth Sportfishing Volunteer Leaders and Agents

Volume 2, Issue 2

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May 2000

## YOUTH SPORTFISHING WORKSHOP A SUCCESS!

The second training workshop for the **Mississippi 4-H Youth Sportfishing Pilot Program** was held on April 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> at the Field and Stream Activities Center at the Mossy Oak Outlet Mall in West Point. This two-day event was used to introduce volunteers to all aspects of the Youth Sportfishing Program. The volunteers were trained in one of 5 disciplines; however, each volunteer was allowed time to view the activities of other disciplines. This "shadowing" of other disciplines helped to give each volunteer better insight into the overall goal of getting kids involved in this program as well as familiarizing them with other activities that could be used with youth in local programs.

Overall, 43 people participated in this training session. Of this number, 29 were new volunteers to the program coming from either an existing pilot county or



Coordinators "shadow" the tackle crafting session where they learn to make fishing lures.



from the 5 new counties admitted into the Pilot Program this spring.

Existing pilots that sent new volunteers to be trained included Clay, Lowndes, Marion, Neshoba, Oktibbeha, Pontotoc, and Rankin. New counties recently admitted to the pilot program and participating in this spring's training session included: Attala, Choctaw, Desoto, Tate, and Union. The Pilot Program now includes 21 counties statewide.

The number of new volunteers that were trained in each of the five disciplines included: Angling Skills 7, Aquatic Ecology 5, Coordinators 8, People and Fish 4, and Tackle Crafting 8.

Several important guests joined us for our group session on Friday night. Mr Jimmy Bryan,  
YSF Training Workshop--Continued on Page 2

*This newsletter is written for volunteer leaders and 4-H agents who are involved in the Youth Sportfishing Program in counties statewide. We hope that you will find it useful in inspiring and preparing you to work with our youth and helpful as you share with other volunteer leaders in your community the dynamics and the value of the Youth Sportfishing Program to the youth we serve.*

*Sincerely,*



## 2 Mississippi Youth Sportfishing Program

President of Prairie Livestock, Inc. and a partner in the Mossy Oak Outdoor Outlets project, welcomed the group and shared his enthusiasm for the MSU/Mossy Oak partnership that has been established in West Point and the vision for the future of the Field and Stream Activities Center on the Mossy Oak property.

Mr. Fox Haas, Chief Financial Officer of Haas Outdoors, Inc. (and father of Mossy Oak founder Toxey Haas) presented a challenge to participants to “make a difference” in the lives of young people by being an influential part of their lives. “Mr. Fox” shared a poignant and timely testimony of a recent tragedy involving a young man whose death may have been averted by exposure to a program that provides mentors who serve as role models for life.

Northeast District Program Director, Robert McNeil (who is a member of the YSF State Management Team), also joined in opening events on Friday night.

Volunteer leaders and agents who participated in the workshop also got a sneak preview of the new **“Something’s Fishy in Mississippi” 4-H School Enrichment Module**, which is being



Larry Clay checks out the “Something’s Fishy” interactive computer program.

pilot tested in four counties in April and May 2000. This is an aquatic science school enrichment program featuring lesson activities, an interactive computer program, and a freestanding display to enhance third and fourth graders’

May 2000

awareness and understanding of fisheries resources, aquatic science, and water quality/conservation.



YSF Volunteers learn to make Fish Prints, a Japanese art form known as “gyotaku.”

Tate and Desoto County volunteers enter the Youth Sportfishing Program this year as a new Pilot Program.

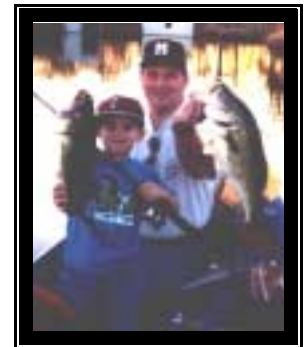


Volunteers learn about pond life in the Aquatic Ecology discipline.

We would like to thank our trainers who took time out of busy schedules to help us get a new crop of volunteers oriented and off to a good start. These trainers included: Lise Foy, Kathleen Elgarico, Kathy Petty, Georgia Polk, Sue Rogers, Hoot Gibson, Inez Saum, Anita Webb, George Petty, and Marty Brunson.

## MARTY ON MENTORING

A few weeks ago, I received an e-mail from a special cousin of mine who lives in Bogia, Fl (pronounce that “bo-gee”), which is not too far from the big city of Bratt, about 30 miles north of Pensacola! This particular cousin is one of the “old men” in my life, since he was grown and in the Air Force



### 3 Mississippi Youth Sportfishing Program

May 2000

while I was still a child (He probably won't appreciate me telling this, but he is 20 years older than me, which makes him a bona fide "old man" by now!) In his frequent visits back to my home town of Mobile and then during his days being stationed at Brookley Air Force Base in that city, he spent much time at our house and was a "favorite nephew" to my father and mother. I'm pretty sure that Momma and Daddy were favorites of his, as well! For reasons too numerous to list here, Billy Ray was one of my childhood heroes and mentors.

Billy Ray is now retired and living on the property where he grew up in the outskirts of Bogia. His bride of many long years, Francis, suffers from Alzheimer's disease, and is now completely bedridden. Billy Ray is a faithful husband and is constantly by her side caring for her every need. This unfortunate circumstance provides him opportunity to spend a significant amount of time working on his computer, primarily researching our family geneology. We communicate frequently via e-mail, and have grown closer during the past few years because we are able to communicate so easily. Billy recently forwarded a story that he had received from someone else that "hits home" with regard to our responsibilities in working with youth. I don't know whether or not this is a true story, but it certainly could be. Regardless, it clearly illustrates the basic principles of adult involvement with youth that we emphasize in our Youth Sportfishing Program. Those who participated in our April 7-8 Training Workshop in West Point may recall my Saturday night presentation entitled "The Blessing". During that talk I related a story of my own relationship with a little boy who reminds me in several ways of "Teddy" in the following story. It is my prayer that, years from now, the story might be told that I was a positive influence in this little boy's life like Mrs. Thompson ultimately became for Teddy!



#### TEDDY

*There is a story of an elementary teacher from many years*

*ago. Her name was Mrs. Thompson. And as she stood in front of her 5th grade class on the very first day of school, she told the children a lie. Like most teachers, she looked at her students and said that she loved them all the same. But that was impossible, because there in the front row, slumped in his seat, was a little boy named Teddy Stoddard.*

*Mrs. Thompson had watched Teddy the year before and noticed that he didn't play well with the other children, that his clothes were messy and that he constantly needed a bath. And Teddy could be unpleasant. It got to the point where Mrs. Thompson would actually take delight in marking his papers with a broad red pen, making bold X's and then putting a big "F" at the top of his papers.*

*At the school where Mrs. Thompson taught, she was required to review each child's past records and she put Teddy's off until last. However, when she reviewed his file, she was in for a surprise.*

*Teddy's first grade teacher wrote, "Teddy is a bright child with a ready laugh. He does his work neatly and has good manners...he is a joy to be around." His second grade teacher wrote, "Teddy is an excellent student, well liked by his classmates, but he is troubled because his mother has a terminal illness and life at home must be a struggle." His third grade teacher wrote, "His mother's death has been hard on him. He tries to do his best but his father doesn't show much interest and his home life will soon affect him if some steps aren't taken." Teddy's fourth grade teacher wrote, "Teddy is withdrawn and doesn't show much interest in school. He doesn't have many friends and sometimes sleeps in class."*

*By now, Mrs. Thompson realized the problem and she was ashamed of herself. She felt even worse when her students brought her Christmas presents, wrapped in beautiful ribbons and bright paper, except for Teddy's. His present was clumsily wrapped in the heavy, brown paper that he got from a grocery bag. Mrs. Thompson took pains to open it in the middle of the other presents. Some of the children started to laugh when she found a rhinestone bracelet with some of the stones missing and a bottle that was one quarter full of perfume. But she stifled the children's laughter when she exclaimed how pretty the bracelet was, putting it on, and dabbing some of the perfume on her wrist.*

#### 4 Mississippi Youth Sportfishing Program

May 2000

*Teddy Stoddard stayed after school that day just long enough to say, "Mrs. Thompson, today you smelled just like my Mom used to." After the children left she cried for at least an hour. On that very day, she quit teaching reading and writing and arithmetic. **Instead, she began to teach children.***

*Mrs. Thompson paid particular attention to Teddy. As she worked with him, his mind seemed to come alive. The more she encouraged him, the faster he responded. By the end of the year, Teddy had become one of the smartest children in the class and, despite her lie that she would love all the children the same, Teddy became one of her "teacher's pets."*

*A year later, she found a note under her door, from Teddy, telling her that she was still the best teacher he ever had in his whole life. Six years went by before she got another note from Teddy. He then wrote that he had finished high school, third in his class, and she was still the best teacher he ever had in his whole life. Four years after that, she got another letter, saying that while things had been tough at times, he'd stayed in school, had stuck with it, and would soon graduate from college with the highest of honors. He assured Mrs. Thompson that she was still the best and favorite teacher he ever had in his whole life.*

*Then four more years passed and yet another letter came. This time he explained that after he got his bachelor's degree, he decided to go a little further. The letter explained that she was still the best and favorite teacher he ever had. But now his name was a little longer; the letter was signed, Theodore F. Stoddard, M.D.*

*The story doesn't end there. You see, there was yet another letter that spring. Teddy said he'd met this girl and was going to be married. He explained that his father had died a couple of years ago and he was wondering if Mrs. Thompson might agree to sit in the place at the wedding that was usually reserved for the mother of the groom. Of course, Mrs. Thompson did. And guess what? She wore that bracelet, the one with several rhinestones missing. And she made sure she was wearing the perfume that Teddy remembered his mother wearing on their last Christmas together. They hugged each other, and Dr. Stoddard whispered in Mrs. Thompson's ear, "Thank you Mrs. Thompson for believing in me. Thank you so much for making me feel important and showing me that I could*

*make a difference."*

*Mrs. Thompson, with tears in her eyes, whispered back. She said, "Teddy, you have it all wrong. You were the one who taught me that I could make a difference. I didn't know how to teach until I met you."*



Hey, folks! .... As you lead your county Youth Sportfishing Program take care that you not teach "Youth Sportfishing!" **TEACH CHILDREN!**

### FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. **"I have other volunteers in my county who are interested in helping with the Youth Sportfishing Program but have not attended the state training workshop, can these individuals still participate?"**

**Answer:** *By all means, YES! Our Youth Sportfishing volunteers who have attended the state training workshop can train other volunteers at the local level. These volunteers can then help out where their talents/expertise allow. Ideally, we would like these same individuals to sign up to attend the next state training workshop.*

2. **"I live in a county that is not currently involved in the Youth Sportfishing Pilot Program but we would like to conduct Youth Sportfishing activities at local events. Can the Youth Sportfishing Program provide supplies or support for these activities?"**

**Answer:** *Unfortunately, No. As much as we would like to help all of our 4-H youth agents, we are fully aware of our limitations. At this time we have only enough resources and equipment to support our 21 pilot counties.*

3. **"Can I, as a volunteer leader or 4-H youth agent in the Youth Sportfishing Pilot Program, involve this program in my county's school systems?"**

## 5 Mississippi Youth Sportfishing Program

May 2000

**Answer:** *YES! Ideally, we would like for you to use the “Something’s Fishy in Mississippi” 4-H school enrichment module to expose children to the Youth Sportfishing Program. In addition, many activities in your Mississippi Youth Sportfishing Curriculum Notebooks can be used in the classroom to introduce youth to this new program.*

### 4. “What is the “Something’s Fishy in Mississippi” 4-H School Enrichment Module?”

**Answer:** *This is an aquatic science school enrichment program featuring lesson activities, an interactive computer program, and a freestanding educational display to enhance third and fourth graders’ awareness and understanding of fisheries resources, aquatic science, and water quality/conservation.*

### 5. “How can I schedule this module for third and fourth grade teachers in my county?”

**Answer:** *In the summer of 2000, we will notify our Youth Sportfishing Pilot Counties of the procedures for scheduling the module. This module will typically stay in participating schools for a two week period.*

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## SOMETHING’S FISHY IN MISSISSIPPI!

### A 4-H School Enrichment Program for Third and Fourth Grades

As mentioned above in the “Frequently Asked Questions”, this is an aquatic science school enrichment program designed to enhance third and fourth graders’ awareness and understanding of fisheries resources, aquatic science, and water quality/conservation.

Currently, this newly completed school enrichment module is being tested by teachers in three pilot counties. Thus far, the module is getting rave reviews by our pilot teachers! The mobile enrichment module contains computers and an interactive computer program, an

educational display with life-like fish models, and a workbook for teachers containing many educational student activities (with student copies), answer keys, overheads, and crossword puzzles/word find games. The module will be available for use in third and fourth grade classrooms in our Youth Sportfishing Pilot Counties in the fall of 2000. We will notify YSF Pilot counties this summer with details on how to reserve this enrichment module for the fall.



The “Something’s Fishy in Mississippi” freestanding educational display.

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## YOUTH SPORTFISHING POND CLOSE TO READY

While planning the Mossy Oak Outlet Mall in West Point, Mossy Oak founder Toxey Haas and his team contacted me to discuss construction and management of the pond that they planned to develop on the property. As we discussed pond management in general, it became apparent that we (MSU and Mossy Oak) shared individual threads of a common vision for an unprecedented program. At the time, the Mississippi Youth Sportfishing Program was still a dream and a future vision, but it didn’t take much arm twisting to convince Haas that THIS pond should be constructed to facilitate youth fishing events, and managed to make these events possible. It dawned on us that this pond could be the seed that led to realization of an even larger vision, and it was quickly designated as the FIRST Youth

## 6 Mississippi Youth Sportfishing Program

May 2000

### Sportfishing Pond!

We soon concluded that a partnership between the MSU Department of Wildlife and Fisheries/4-H and Mossy Oak would benefit Mississippi's youth. MSU-ES could deliver the educational program delivery infrastructure and Mossy Oak could supply access to support provided by a worldwide network of outdoor equipment manufacturers. The seed was planted for collaborative development of a state-of-the-art outdoor education center and meeting/training facilities for **4-H Field and Stream** at Mossy Oak. This facility has been dubbed the "Field and Stream Activities Center", and great progress has been made. Currently, all earthwork has been completed for the shooting ranges, and events have already been held on-site. But, that is another story!

The 7 acre pond was built with clean shorelines that provide easy access to the edge of the water. Additionally, fish attractors and gravel beds have been established, making it a pretty sure bet that young anglers can find the fish eager and willing to bite during special events! The fish population has been established and, with the addition of bass this spring, will be primed and ready to host youth fishing events in the near future.



*Larry Clay places a tag on a largemouth bass in the YSF Pond at the Field and Stream Activities Center. Bass in this pond have received these special tags to allow us to monitor the fish population to ensure management success.*

The US Forest Service and the US Fish and Wildlife Service have partnered with us and made significant contributions to establishment of the

pond and its resident fish. Special thanks are due to an old friend of mine, Mr. Larry Clay, USFS Fisheries Biologist who has gone out of his way to assist me in preparing the pond for our youth. Larry has spent considerable time on this pond project (some of it late at night!) By the way, Larry is also one of our newest trained YSF volunteers, having been trained as a "Coordinator" during the April 2000 YSF Training! We have formed a partnership with the Forest Service on the Youth Sportfishing Program, and we anticipate exciting things from this new relationship.

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