



*** Official Write-up & Youth Muskie Hunt Event Summary for 2012 ***

This past week on September 20-23, Muskies Inc. and the Youth Conservation Alliance held a regional youth Muskie fishing event on Moose Lake, in Hayward Wisconsin. The event was lead by Kevin Bushnick, National Youth Fishing Director for Muskies Inc. Kevin is also the Founder & Chairman of the Youth Conservation Alliance. The YCA is an organization 100% focused on educating youth about the great outdoors primarily through fishing and hunter education programs.

In the years ahead, Muskies Inc. (www.muskiesinc.org) and the Youth Conservation Alliance (www.theyca.org) will be place a major emphasis on teaching children about environmental sciences through the sport of Muskie fishing. This is being done not only to ensure the future of the Muskie fishery, but also to provide youth with a tremendous opportunity for environmental education outside of the classroom. We call it our "outdoors versus online" program.

Nearly 50 children (boys & girls ages 6-17) participated from Wisconsin, Illinois and Minnesota. Each child was accompanied by a parent or legal guardian. There were dad's, mom's, grandparents, aunt's and uncle's who participated. This was a family oriented program and it sure felt like it throughout the 3 day event.

On the education front, many school teachers were present including Michelle Groves, Professor of Environmental Sciences at Oakton College in Northern Illinois. Michelle is also the VP of Education for the YCA. Kids at this event were challenged not only with fishing, but ecosystem study and water testing. The kids learned how to read lake maps, they learned about the importance of boating safety, and as a bonus, they were taught how to craft and use their own fishing lure by Hayward's very own fisheries biologist Frank Pratt who donated over 50 lure kits and was able to walk the kids through a lure making session where each child, made their own Muskie buck-tail.

Many professional guides were on-site to support the kids during the event. Our "Guide-Masters" included Hayward's fishing legend Larry Ramsell (Author & Muskie Historian) and John Myhre (Professional Guide & Radio Show Host). Other notable guides came from Muskies Inc. South of The Border Chapter of WI and the Fox River Valley Muskies Inc. Chapter from IL. Guides included big-time Muskie fisherman Dan Koniewicz, Tim Crews, Dave VanDoorn, and also included our first female guide, Diana Nuytens. All of these guides put the kids onto fish. We simply could not have caught the number of fish we did without their expertise. We are thankful to them all.

Last year, the kids caught 56 muskies in 3 days. This year, we had nearly 50 kids participate and again, we caught over 50 Muskies... Actually, I think we may have hit the 56 mark exactly. Next year, we're heading North to 57 or more! One thing to remember, ALL the Muskies were released successfully. This gives other people (and especially kids) a chance at catching one of these toothy predators.

Many local Hayward area businesses supported the event in a big way through donations or by providing other items like tackle and clothing. One of our major event sponsors was Ryan Hexum of Slumberland & Wildwoods Furniture who donated an awesome cooler/backpack to each of the kids. Chuck DiVito, Founder of Custom-X Lures hand made a lure for each of the kids with colors designed specifically for fishing Moose Lake. Downtown Hayward's Lures of the North store along with master wood craftsman Casey Edwards hand carved a great Muskie table prize built specifically for the event. Mary and Al Reimemann from Timber Trail Lodge donated a family stay at their resort as a prize. Famous Dave's served up their "famous" pulled pork for lunch on Saturday which was eaten down to the last bite; not even a scrap left for the racoons - there is nothing that compares to Famous Dave's in Hayward! Musky Tales from Northern Illinois continues to be a key sponsor of the event and the Cabela's super-store in Hoffman Estates Illinois awarded the YCA a grant this year to continue advancing youth fishing and hunter education activities. Mike Anderson of Pine Insurance agency from Minnesota made a contribution towards the event and also participated with a father/son and father/uncle team.



Jim Onarheim of the Mystic Moose Resort hosted the Youth Muskie Hunt (YMH) now in its third year. Jim managed accommodations for everyone and set up the Mystic Moose as the base-camp and YCA Command Center. Louie's Landing on Moose Lake was home to our group breakfast and dinner. For our grand-finale food bonanza, we headed over to Charlie's restaurant for our post-event celebration dinner where we feasted on their famous prime-rib and cheesy potato's!!! Muskie kids need to eat well and these two Moose Lake restaurants accomplish the mission every time. The service is outstanding and the restaurant owners Jack, Pam, Julie and Chuck go way out of their way to make everyone feel at home; especially the kids. Yes, they even served up some Mac & Cheese just to keep ALL the young customers happy.

For documentary and educational purposes, the entire event was filmed by 4-time Emmy winning NBC field camera-man Bill Nuytens. Footage from this event is used throughout the year by Muskies Inc. and the YCA in schools and colleges to educate as many youth as we can about the outdoor environment. Dave Carlson from Northland Adventures in Eau Claire was also on-site with his team filming the event for an upcoming show about the importance of getting our youth involved in fishing.

For our closing ceremonies on Sunday morning at the Mystic Moose, we were joined by fishing rock star Pete Maina and his wife Esther, where the kids lined up to get their lures, hats and even boots signed by this larger than life figure who has done so much for the sport of Muskie fishing. This event "wrap-up" is where we recognize the kids for their extraordinary effort and achievements both catching & releasing the ever so elusive MUSKELLUNGE. It's also where we talk to them about the fact these events are really not about catching fish, but simply having fun, learning about being outside, and understanding the importance of relationship building. The reality is, by the end of one of these events, these kids get it. I do think they enjoy the fish catching part for sure, but what they really value is time well spent with the most important people in their world, their family. They will remember these trips for the rest of their lives.

Next years Youth Muskie Hunt is already being planned for September 19-22, 2013. Information on the event will be posted in the months ahead on both the YCA & Muskies Inc. websites.

Article by: *Kevin Bushnick*

Youth Conservation Alliance & Muskies Inc.