

Never Quit: Inspirations from a Hero

Editorial by: Kevin Bushnick, YCA Founder & Chairman

Pictures of Robert O'Neill - The Navy SEAL-Team-6 member who rid the world once and for all of pure evil, Osama bin Laden. Robert was also involved in the mission which saved Captain Richard Phillips. Overall, Robert participated in more than 400 missions spanning 16 years of service. He is one of the most decorated Navy SEAL's ever with 52 decorations including 2 Silver Stars, 4 Bronze Stars with Valor, a Joint Service Commendation Medal with Valor, 3 Presidential Unit Citations, and 2 Navy/Marine Corps

Commendations with Valor.

Kevin Bushnick with Robert O'Neill

When I met and spent time with Robert in February of 2015, I shared with him the mission of the YCA and he loved it!!



Robert presenting about his "Never Quit" philosophy

Having grown up in Montana, Rob spent a lot of time fishing and hunting with his father. Rob is a firm believer in getting kids outdoors and teaching them about the spectacular natural resources we enjoy in the United States.

On a personal note, what an honor to meet this American hero. The thing that struck me about Rob O'Neill was his friendliness. Even though his service in the

armed forces is now legendary and literally part of American history, I saw nothing but humility. No attitude with Rob O'Neill; just a genuine love for his country, love and appreciation for his family, and a person who understands the sacrifices that are made to be free.

Freedom comes at a very high cost. That price is paid by people like Robert O'Neill and all who have served in the armed



Robert O'Neill

forces for our country. Let's always remember and thank them for their service.

Kevin Bushnick YCA Founder THE YCA

NEVER QUIT !

X/OIX ST6

LEEP HUNTING + FISHING

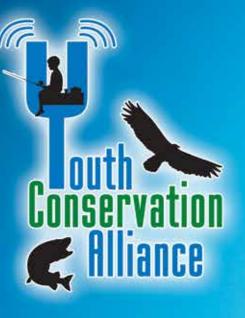


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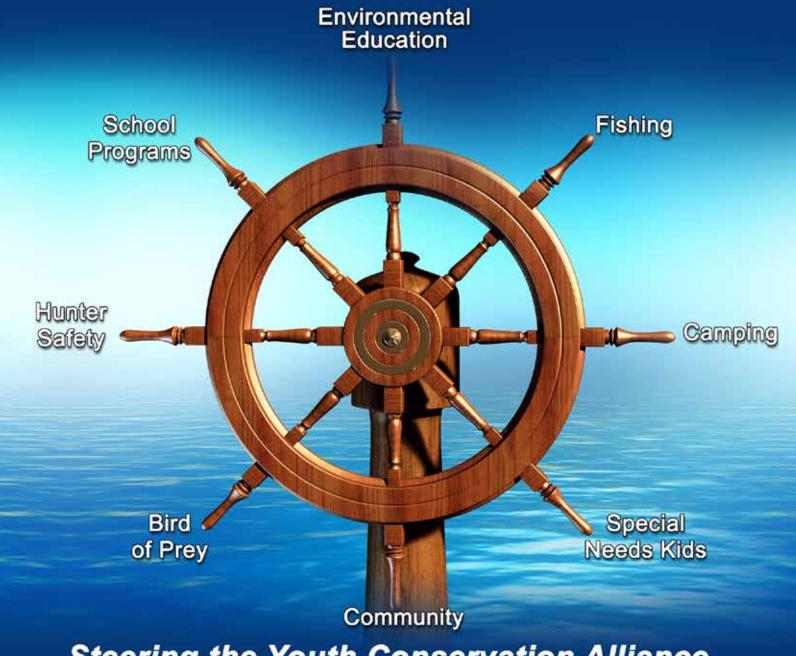
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The YCA would like to thank Sandy Bushnick for all the behind-the-scenes work making our events run smoothly; especially as it pertains to food!



Steering the Youth Conservation Alliance

Thank you to these organizations & individuals who make our programs possible:

The YCA Board of Directors, Sandie Johnson (Mom!), YCA Web-Master Randy Loewecke & JCL Technologies, Brian Walsh & Allegra Marketing Print & Mail, Muskies Inc, Max McGraw Wildlife Foundation, the Illinois Conservation Foundation, Diane Schneider & Cabela's, The Trophy Shop, Fox River Valley Muskies, Round Lake Property Owners Association (RLPOA), Hayward Chapter of Muskies Inc., Hayward Power Sports, The Robin's Nest Hayward, DJ's Dock on Round, The Round Lake Marina, Lures of the North Hayward, Hi-Ho Silver Jewelry Hayward, Hugh C. Becker Foundation, Million Dollar Round Table (MDRT), Tor Saile, Jim Contos, the Riley Family, FAMOUS Dave, Brian Urlacher, Ryan & Crystal Hexum, Angela Alfe & Beautiful Life Photography, Tim Crews, Frank & Olive Lucido, Dan Koniewicz, Brian Corcoran, Brian Hill, Glenn & Laura Zaroski, Larry Ramsell, John Myhre, Daryl Neibauer, Chuck DiVito, Fox River Lures and Rods, Kurt Eltvedt and Musky Tales, Kevin Underwood, David Soderstrom Photography, Sue Melaniphy Photography, Dave VanDoorn (DVD), HACIL School, Ojibwe Tribal Chairman Mic Isham Jr., Rog Williamson, Jim Onarheim & The Mystic Moose Resort, YCA Attorney Tempia Courts, Anna Amparo (LCO), Boys & Girls Club of Lac Courte Oreilles, Karen Breit (LCO), Joel & Charity Valentin, Mike Polhamus (ICF), Lax Reproductions, Timber Trial Lodge, Dance Party DJ's, Michael Lynch, the Reinemann family, Sportsman's Educational Services, Diane Waligurski, Jim Leeseman, Steve Kroll, Sheriff Mark Kelsey, Max Wolter and the WI Dept. of Natural Resources, Great Lakes Fish & Wildlife Commission, the IL Dept. of Natural Resources, Robert O'Neill Seal Team-6... AND and anyone else that we may have forgotten.

Environmental Education The YCA places a major emphasis on teaching children about the environment through fishing and hunting activities. We do this not only to ensure the future of these family oriented sports, but also to provide kids with a tremendous opportunity for environmental education outside of the classroom. Children at YCA events are challenged with ecosystem study and water quality testing. The kids also learn how to read lake maps and are taught about boating safety and fishing regulations. We continue to use high-power biology microscopes as we deploy sophisticated tools to examine the environment while "keeping it simple" through the sports of fishing and hunting. On the educational front, this represents a "practical application" which keeps the kids highly interested in what we're trying to teach them.

Community All YCA events are programs are community oriented. We open up our events to all businesses willing to support us and we always involve local police & fire departments. We also participate in local Government and Township meetings and it is common for the YCA to provide overviews of what the YCA does to these agencies. We embrace area schools, work closely with teachers, and in general provide an "open" setting for kids of all ages to participate. We strongly encourage family participation. Although the YCA has core supporters called "Advocates", being an Advocate is not a requirement for participation.

Fishing The YCA's Youth fishing programs are among our most popular. We try to hold 2 major events annually. Events are generally held in areas where lakes and facilities are large enough to accommodate large groups and boats. Our primary event is held in Hayward Wisconsin and is supported by National fishing organizations like Muskies Inc. Although our programs are geared towards the fresh water "muskellunge" species of fish, we encourage multi-species fishing too including Walleye, Bass and Northern Pike. Although YCA programs are tailored for kids, we strongly encourage family participation and welcome people of all ages. It is quite common to have not only parents, but Grandparents and Aunts & Uncles participate.

Fluxter Safety The YCA along with the State Department of Natural Resources and Conservation Police offer a variety of official Hunter Education programs. At these classes, we utilize a number of different training tools including professional Training Firearms. A key theme at all YCA events is safety; this includes boating, fishing, hunting and general out-door safety. We place strong importance on teaching youth to have a "plan" and tell people exactly where you are going and what you are doing. It also encompasses education programs for kids on how to deal with strangers. Classes are offered primarily in the Fall time of year and are given at a number of retail store locations and State facilities.

School Programs School teachers, Principals and College Professors regularly join us to help teach the kids about environmental sciences. The YCA makes it a point to come to area schools and show kids of all ages what we do at our outdoor events. All of our outdoor programs are thoroughly documented by professional photographers and videographes. This gives us the ability to bring our programs into the schools especially during the winter months. This provides children with a wide range of outdoor exposure and gives them an in-depth look at the wildlife around them in a school setting. Our shows are multi-media presentations and include music, videos and laser light shows.

Special Needs Kids The YCA continues to welcome children with Down Syndrome and Autism to our programs. We have found over many years that children with these disabilities respond extremely well to our outdoor programs and especially to fishing. We work closely with schools centered on Autism and also work with other not-for-profit organizations whose focus is centered on a variety of disabilities.

Bird of Prey One of the YCA's core curriculum's is the Bird of Prey program. These programs are portable; meaning, we have the ability to bring live birds into schools, parks, and other places where an assembly can be organized. We emphasize and teach how birds fit into the overall ecosystem and how we can help sustain and protect their habitats. This gives kids a safe, close-up view of these spectacular animals. The YCA has trained and federally certified Bird of Prey rehabilitators on staff to facilitate these programs.

Camping Camping is on of the YCA's most family oriented events are requires everyone to chip in! Usually these events run 2-3 days. Camping events are held at State facilities and have many outdoor components to them including fishing, hunter education and even Firearms safety for the adults. Camping events usually have activities for children of all ages and include crafts and art projects. Camping is not for everyone but for those who are willing to put forth the effort, it can be very gratifying. The YCA always does these events where shelter is near-by in case of inclement weather.

Spearing: A Means to Fish and Live By

Editorial by: Kevin Bushnick, YCA Founder & Chairman

Although not a fisheries biologist, I certainly have made a concentrated effort over the past several years to educate myself on the issue of native spearing and especially, the spearing of Muskies. That said, I'd like to present another side to this highly charged controversial coin.

First, let me say right up front here that I love this fish. Not only do I like to catch Muskies, I've spent countless hours studying their habits and

their habitat. I look at them under microscopes and I'm amazed at what I see. In my opinion, they are the greatest apex-predator fresh water fish of all time; and, they

It's important to keep focus on why the natives are spearing and that reason is harvesting fish for food; which I have no problem with. We all have to think through this a bit deeper. Remember, the natives have speared Muskies and other species of fish long before we ever came to this country and "moved in"; hence the term, Native American. On a reservation however, this is their land and any adjoining waters may fall under their Nation of laws. The same might be true for lakes outside of their lands because of certain treaty rights. If the Natives want to spear under these laws then it's within their rights.

Let's also recognize there are those that like to stir up trouble (whites & natives) around this highly charged

issue. BUT in large part, the natives don't sit around looking to aggravate the white-man by spearing Muskies; they have better things to do. Those who spear are relatively small in number and it's really anecdotal to throw up a few pictures of natives spearing Muskies and then paint with a broad brush that they are all doing it. It's just not true. Again, they have the right to do it none-the-less.

Think spearing is only something the Natives do? Think again. One of the biggest ice fishing events in all North America is the annual spearing of sturgeon on Lake Winnebago in Wisconsin. At this event, hundreds if not thousands of people gather to spear sturgeon through the ice. The 2015 sturgeon spearing season was recently completed bringing the season total to 2,158 fish harvested (1,870 from Lake Winnebago and 288 from the Upriver Lakes). The 1,870 fish harvested from Lake Winnebago ranked as the 6th highest harvest on record from the 1940-2015 harvest seasons. My point here, is spearing is not something unique to the Indians.

Here's another not so well known fact. The natives might actually be the ones stocking the lake to begin with! Ever think about that? It's not talked about much but in fact, the natives have their own fisheries management system and in some cases manage their own large hatcheries depending on the Tribe. Yep, it surprised me too. In fact, on my own home lake, it was interesting to find out that the Ojibwe Natives have stocked the lake over the years with thousands of Walleye's. So why would we complain when they come in the springtime and spear some of these fish? Well, something to think about. On my home lake, the Walleye population remains among the healthiest in the State despite the spearing that occurs.

Remember this, spearing in many cases is how natives fish. It's truly part of their heritage. For me, I have the luxury of fishing out of a nice, plush, Ranger boat. I have 3 depth finders tied into NASA with GPS and I have side-scan imaging to show me precise underwater visuals of how the structure and fish look under my boat, and off to both sides. I can practically tell you what sex a fish is 50 feet under water. I also have all the hightech fishing rods, lures and other gadgetry hoping all this technology will get me one of these monsters. Well, this is just not how the natives fish;

or live. Getting to the next Walmart BASS pro-circuit or participating in the next Muskies Inc. tournament is simply not anywhere on their priority list; at least none that I've met.

On a more scientific front depending on the body of water, harvesting a batch of Muskies may not statistically affect the overall population. It's like harvesting any other species. Some harvesting can actually create

> more trophy fish and a healthier ecosystem. The natives (now that I know many of them) generally don't harvest old fish that we call trophies. They like the smaller "eaters" just like we do.

> Now let me share something that I saw personally last year when we held our Youth Muskie fishing program in Hayward where more than 25 native children participated. To preface this observation, understand the kids (whites & natives) don't carry all this spearing baggage and non-sense around with them. They were simply there to hang out with all the other kids, go fishing, and have some fun. No prejudice, no bias, no hate, just kids being kids. Some of them said something interesting to me, they asked "why are we not eating the fish we catch" ??? You see to them, fish are food; plain and simple. Catching fish in their minds means something good to put on the dinner table. I had at least a half dozen kids ask the same question to me. The concept of

catching fish "just for the sport of it" is not something they are accustomed to. I'll say this, if we all ate more fish instead of Big Mac's we'd be in a healthier place. Perhaps these native kids are on to something here...

So, let's not get hung up the fact that Native Muskie spearing takes place. Most of us may not like it, but it's legal and there are biological rules in place for it. It doesn't help anyone (or the Muskie) to resurrect and perpetuate bad feelings just because we may approach Muskies from a different perspective. Let's continue to focus on keeping the Muskie populations and their habitat healthy and abundant. This is in everyone's best interest and having good conversations about it serves as common ground.

We all would agree that a small number of ill-intentioned people can really do some damage in terms of a fish population even to a large body of water. I would suggest that if anyone sees a Muskie or any other fish being harvested illegally (spearing or otherwise), then report it. This is perhaps the best thing we as Muskie fisherman can do. Don't ignore what might be illegal, but at the same time don't stir the pot and create animosity and bad feelings over legal Muskie spearing. We need to be tolerant, accept it and learn to live with.

I've become friends with many natives near my home in Hayward Wisconsin and believe it or not, if you catch them at the right time and explain the importance of this fish to us crazy Muskie anglers, they might just get a greater appreciation for why we chase this fish around everywhere to ultimately catch it, take a picture of our great achievement, and then throw it back in the lake... Further, taking pictures, mounting it, having a fake mount made from the picture, and then bragging about it for the rest of our lives does seems kind of vain when you think about it...

In closing, I'm sure this article will aggravate some folks, but we need to take a different approach with our native neighbors and friends. That approach is tolerance, education, and letting them know "in a professional, more respectful way", we'd like them to understand what a seemingly religious relationship we have with the Muskie. You never know, they might just let the next one swim by and stick their spear into a Walleye instead. Food for thought...

Kevin with Mic Isham Jr.,

Ojibwe Tribal Chairman

From the Desk of... Kevin Bushnick

To my Family & Friends: This past summer, the Bushnick's got to know one of the most awesome little girls and families that we have ever come across in our lifetime. Allow me to introduce you

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Kevin & Sandy Bushnick with Gigi

to GiGi Gianni. GiGi is 12 years old. She was born with Down syndrome. Now in my travels over the past 5 years with the Youth Conservation Alliance, I've met some really cool kids; but this little superhero named GiGi inspires me.

First, let me give you a quick Down Syndrome-101. Children born with Down syndrome have one more chromosome also known

as Trisomy-21. Specifically, they have all or part of a 3rd copy of chromosome 21. Down Syndrome is a genetic condition which a person has 47 chromosomes instead of the usual 46. This particular chromosome can effect emotions. Kids with Downs are generally very happy, trusting and love easily. The problem with this is they are vulnerable. Kids with Down's typically have low muscle



Fun on the lake

tone and decreased small motor function ability. This is the primary reason for their speech impediment because the tongue is a strong muscle. With all of this in the backdrop, let me share with you how GiGi lives her life.

Pictures shown are of GiGi Muskie fishing where she spent over 5 hours with

me and a professional guide tossing Muskie lures around on Moose Lake in Hayward. She also went ATV riding with me which was way-cool for both of us. Want more? Well we went tubing where she continually asked me to "zigzag" around the water. Yep, she fell off a few times; laughed and got back on. What a trooper. No complaints; just smiles. This kid RULES.

Honestly, I was hardpressed to find where this disability showed itself. After spending 3 days with GiGi, it became quickly apparent to me that the Gianni family is one tight-knit unit with



Kevin & Gig

love at the core. Because of this their closeness, this little girl can function as near to "normal" as possible. AND, as a result of GiGi having Down syndrome, her mom (Nancy) & dad (Paul) founded the GiGi's Playhouse organization. (gigisplayhouse.org/) This is one of the coolest not-for-profits on the planet. It's a place for families to connect with other families who have children with Down syndrome. This is a purpose-built facility where families with Down syndrome children can come together, give their child a place to be safe and comfortable with others like them; a place to



Bella & Franco, Gigi's sister & brother

simply learn and have fun. Recently, GiGi's Playhouse launched 2 new projects with "life skills" at the core. One is Hugs & Mugs where they learn about art, crafting customized mugs, customer interaction and business skills. The other is GiGi's University where they are taught a specialized curriculum that they can take with

them down life's path. GiGi's offers more than 25 therapeutic and educational programs. It gives these wonderful children a fighting chance in a tough and often times brutal world. GiGi's Playhouse is headquartered in Hoffman Estates, IL and they have nearly 20 centers all across the United States. Talk about awesome; and it all stemmed from GiGi.

In closing, I'd just like to say that if you ever have an opportunity to work with a Down syndrome child, don't miss the opportunity. One thing is for certain, these kids don't want you to feel sorry for them. All they need is meaning-

ful and relevant interaction and education. They have pride and like to do things for themselves. They are VERY capable. They just need some help along the way. As we all do.









The YCA Goes to School

By: Crystal Hexum

I don't know about anyone else, but I get so excited when a unique educational experience comes to our small town of

Hayward WI. Our sleepy little town is about 1.5 hours away from just about everything.

If I want to have my students participate in a field trip or activity, usually we have to travel a long way. This last spring, May 2014, something very special came to us. I have known Kevin Bushnick, for a few years now; I originally met him at a Youth Muskie Hunt that my husband Ryan Hexum had been supporting through our businesses. I would have never expected that from that meeting, we would some day be orchestrating for my school be able to participate in an event of our own.

"My school", as I so affectionately refer to it, is the Hayward Center for Individualized Learning (HACIL).

We are a virtual charter school or can better be described as a hybrid between home-based education and public school. Our students have individualized educational plans and curriculum tailored to their needs and interests. Having the YCA event in our new facility seemed to fit perfectly as our students pursue unique career opportunities. This event was able to reach more than just HACIL students and their families. As I said, Hayward is



Crystal Hexum

a long way from most anywhere, so when we invited other students from the area, they jumped at the chance to participate. Four different groups of students came to HACIL that day. Waadookodaading Ojibwe Language Immersion school with its students from Pre-K through fifth grade; The Northern Waters Environmental School of middle school students, and students from all grades from the Boys & Girls Club were able to participate. It was such a joy to see the students experience an event that bridged "learning" with "fun."

During the program, all the students were able to hear speakers that included the County Sheriff Mark Kelsey, the LCO Tribal Chairman Mic Isham, JR., Max Wolter, Hayward's area fisheries biologist, and Jim Onarheim of the Round Lake Fire Department. Many of Hayward's professional fishermen talked to the kids as well.

From the lights to the music to the amazing video footage, the

show was captivating the entire time. Students seemed to be perched on the edge of their seats. Being a teacher and adminis-

trator for a few years now, I know that is no small feet. The YCA staff was upbeat and engaging. I didn't know microbiology could be presented in such an interesting way for such a range of students.

Other very important guests that were in attendance at the May event were Michelle Groves and her "birds of prey" ambassadors. Two majestic creatures with very important jobs were along showing students the real live look at birds of prey. "Willow", a Red-tailed Hawk was in her spender, positioned delicately on her handlers arm. I was granted the enormous privilege of holding her for a moment to get my photo taken. It amazed me how light she could feel but yet so powerful sitting on my arm. Moon Dance, a Great Horned Owl

with her poised look and focused gaze was also a sight to behold. Even living in this area of Northern WI, some students had never seen such beauties up close. We all learned so much that day.

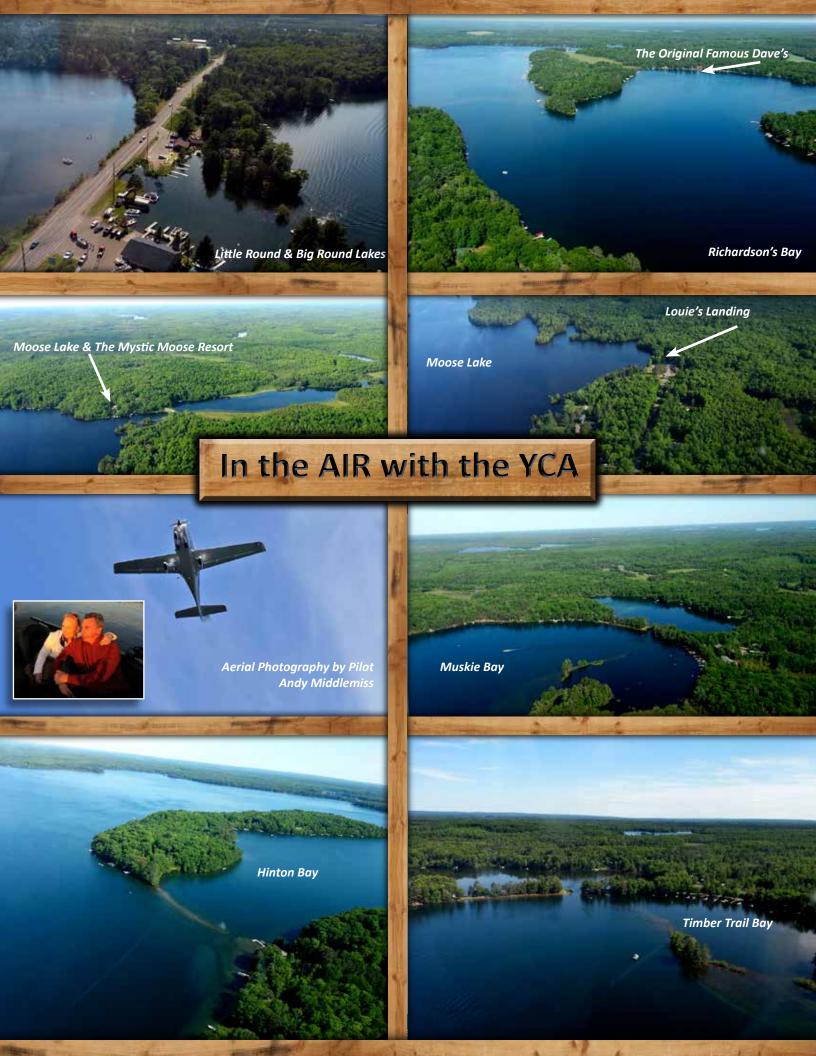
I don't think I am overstepping by saying on behalf of all the schools that we are so pleased that our students and families were able to take part in this event. Hayward has been enriched for the experience and by the generosity of the YCA. We hope to have the opportunity again in the near future. If Kevin Bushnick and the



Group Picture at HACIL School

YCA have anything to say about it, students' lives will continue to be affected in a positive way for years to come.

Crystal Hexum with the YCA's Red Tailed Hawk



The YCA "Muskie Kids"

By: Larry Ramsell, Muskie Historian & Guide

When Kevin Bushnick, YCA Founder, asked me if I would like to guide some kids Muskie fishing, I said, "Why not." I figured if the kids were anything like guiding women, I had it made since women listen to instructions and pick up casting techniques very quick. Of course, one had to figure in the short attention span of



Larry Ramsell, teaching YCA kids how to safely handle Muskies

today's kids since Muskie rods don't connect to the Internet!

My previous experience's with kids and Muskie fishing had been quite variable... some were quick learners and wanted to "just do it"

and some could care less and had the attention span of a puppy. Lo and behold, was I in for a treat!

Over the past 5 years, there has been 7 YCA/Muskie's, Inc. Kids Muskie outings. Six of them have been on Hayward, Wisconsin's Moose Lake and the 7th on Hayward's Round Lake. During those 7 outings, I have long lost count of the number of kids I had on-board my boat... mostly the girls! I don't know if Kevin did that to try and punish me or what, but the joke was on him if that was his intent! What fun! And talk about quick learners regardless of the age or gender. I believe I've had them from 8 years old up to 17.

For some of the smaller participants, I thought perhaps they would have a problem handling the heavy Muskie equipment and large lures... I downsized where I could and still have them in the game. Was I ever surprised! Almost all of them became champion casters and I'd wager that 95% of them wouldn't quit; they wanted to catch a Muskie so bad! A few had moments of "rest and relaxation" and a few took naps, but most just kept pounding away. Some even went back out after I was done for the day!!

I'm happy to say that my success rate in getting all of them into a Muskie, for most their very first, was very high...I can recall only a couple that didn't score. And, a few of them were winners of the big trophy or in the top echelon. I even had one 10-year old little redhead catch a 44-incher to take top honors.

And talk about good sportsmen and women; I had no complain-

ers and almost all were just happy to be a part of the outing. I had

another young Lady that really impressed me when she lost a real monster at the net (my fault and second year in a row). She didn't complain or make any negative comments about her bad luck. I felt so bad about missing her fish that second time that it kept me awake most of that night. I ended up getting up around 3 am to put together a trophy for her that I called a "Good"



Sportsman (women) ship and Accomplishment Trophy". What a great little girl, and, I was able to finally get her a fish the following year...not a monster, but she was happy anyway!

Another great young Lady landed her first three muskies with me the first day aboard, and she deserved them too...she just never quit casting, what a trooper. The guys I've had aboard too, did a great job and a couple of them won top or high honors in the trophy ranks too.



One of Larry's proud moments on Moose Lake

I probably shouldn't say this (heads may swell), but there have been a few of the guys that have developed into such great Muskie anglers that I would put them up against the top anglers in the sport of Muskie fishing!

It has been a fun ride and thanks Kevin for inviting me along! Muskie regards - Larry



2014 Outing on Big Round Lake, Hayward By: Joseph Alfe, YCA Fishing Programs

2014 marked the first YCA outing to Big Round Lake, in Hayward, Wisconsin. Accommodations were secured at several area locations and the event was generously sponsored by the Round Lake

Property Owners Association. The cabins on Big Round were beautiful, cozy and a great place to relax and enjoy the event for my entire family.

Past events were held on Moose Lake, but this year the YCA had a very special event planned in conjunction with the Lac Courte Oreilles



Team YCA Group Shot at the Timber Trail Lodge on Big Round Lake, June 2014

band of the Ojibwa Nation, the caretakers of the Hayward area reservation lakes and fisheries. This unprecedented exchange of cultures and ideas is what the YCA is all about – introducing kids to the outdoors and to conservation. This event did not disappoint, as everyone contributed to both the camaraderie and the conservation education. Kids were challenged not only with fishing but with the construction of fish habitats as well. Water testing and biology lessons were conducted by Michelle Groves of the YCA. It is these lessons that instill our youth with the groundwork and basic understanding of the bio culture of the water environment that helps them become not only better anglers, but also better stewards of the environment.

I have never fished the storied waters of Big Round, so I was excited to get on the water with the girls. My cabin mate, lan Swenson, of Minnesota, and his 10 year old daughter Olivia made great partners for my 11 year old daughter Makayla.

Makayla is a long time veteran of YCA events, and since this was Olivia's first, Makayla made sure to get her comfortable and ready to fish, and fish they did! On the first day, Ian and I made a pre-dawn foray to scout the water (and to get some adult time in) and right away Ian raised a nice Muskie on a Chaos Tackle Medussa off a nice breaking point. Since I was also interested in the lakes legendary Smallmouth, we then hit a rock bar that Kevin had suggested. As soon as we put the trolling motor down in the



Monster Round Lake Small Mouth

calm as glass water, we got a visual of several large muskie and

Small-mouth cruising this gin clear water. I flipped a jig at one and quickly landed a bruiser of a Small-mouth, easily in the 5# class. After several fish we decided to go get breakfast and return with

the girls, thinking we had a sure thing lined up for the girls. By the time we returned, a gusting south wind had risen, and it was rolling large waves into the bar, which at that point was unfishable. We headed to the calmer confines of a large bay near Famous Dave's, which generously hosted lunch later that day. We started flipping docs with jigs and drop shot

> and immediately the girls started catching nice Small-mouth. Makavla had just hoisted an 18" bass in when I saw what I thought was a pack of bass between some docks. I flipped a jig over and the fish turned



46" Muskie caught by the girls on Big Round Lake

around and I realized that it was a big muskies.

I lost it in the glare but then saw the line start swimming off. I set the hook and immediately knew it was a big fish. I handed the rod off to Olivia and she settled in for a long and arduous fight. Now, Olivia is no stranger to big fish, as her dad Ian is a guide and regularly takes Olivia and her brother Max out, so she knew just what to do. Thankfully, I had my powerful Airrus bass rod and she leaned into it and slowly gained back line. After a lengthy tussle, we netted the fish, an astounding 46" Round Lake beauty!

To have helped my friends daughter catch the biggest fish of her life (and the event) was a high point for me, and perfectly framed what the YCA is all about. To have experienced the event and to see the adults passionately help guide these kids was inspiring. It's also amazing and humbling to see the veteran YCA youth mentoring the new kids and show them what they have learned at past programs. This ties in perfectly to our mission to share your experiences with others. This sharing does two things, it helps the YCA grow and it brings today's youth closer to the outdoors.

Kids who set an example for us adults

By: Kevin Bushnick, YCA Founder & Chairman

I'd like to share something that really captured my attention and it occurred during the awards ceremony on Saturday September 20, 2014. I had about 40 medals that I handed out to most of the kids. It was my fault I didn't order enough of these things...

One of the young boys I fished with who lives on the LCO Ojibwe Indian reservation outside of Hayward was named James. I really enjoyed fishing with young James out on my boat. He was



Qumeka with Famous Dave

a good listener and really did a great job learning how to use a bait-casting reel, which is difficult to master. Personally, I'm still trying to figure em out! I met James back in June of this year when we held our fishing program on Round Lake. I also had the pleasure of fishing with James' sister

Qumeka this past

June. We simply had a blast. These two were very nice kids and both of them certainly made a positive impression on me.

At the awards dinner, I gave James a medal that he proudly walked around with, as did most of the other kids. A little time went by and one of the kids that didn't get a medal walked up to me and asked if he could have one. James happened to be standing right there next to me. Well, I felt terrible because

I didn't have anymore. I told the young boy I didn't have any medals left and you could clearly see his disappointment. Interestingly enough, 9 yearold James also listened and looked at the



Captain James

boy's disappointment as all of this was happening.

So James looked at me, looked at the other boy and with the most sincere gesture you can imagine, James told the boy "you can have my medal."

Now over the past 5 years between our youth Muskie hunts and our school programs, I've been around thousands of children.

I've seen kids do all kinds of cool little things whether they're helping each other out, sharing information, or simply having fun together. Of all the things I have ever seen, this brief moment was



James, a shining example of good sportsmanship

the most generous, kindhearted gesture I've ever seen a child make to another child. I think we all know just how important the medals and trophies are to these kids. Well, the story doesn't end here.

Little did we know James & Qumeka's father lost his life to Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) just 5 months prior to our event.

The Father, James "Jimbo" Wilson served 2 tours of duty in Iraq with 6 years of service to our country in the U.S. Army. On top of the tragedy with their dad, their great aunt passed away one day after their father after complications stemming from a motorcycle accident



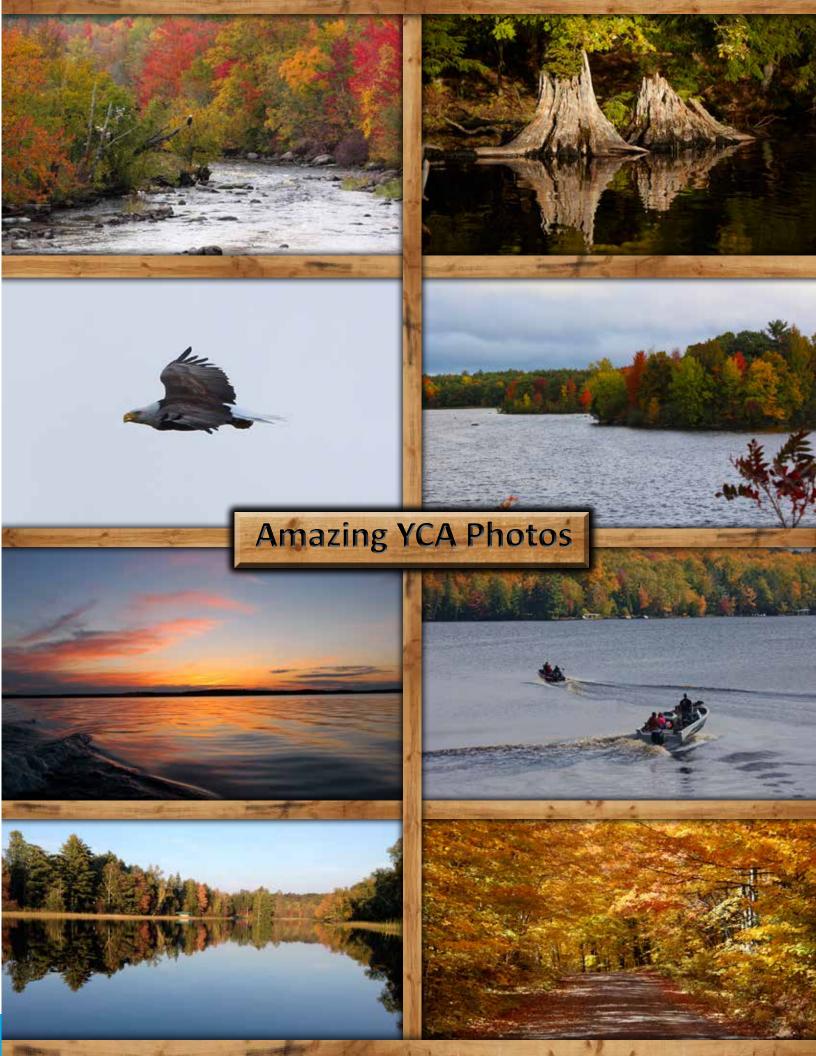
Qumeka and Theresa (BFF's)

where she collided with a deer in the Hayward area.

Despite these tragedies, James & Qumeka came out to our June event with smiles on their faces and James came back in September to fish on Moose Lake. To say that kids are resilient is an understatement. For 9-year old James to offer up his well deserved medal after experiencing the worst that life can dish out, is to say the least, heartwarming. He's an amazing young man.

Remember >> "Kids who fish are cool!"

James & Qumeka are WAY-COOL...!























Special Children with "Special Needs"

By: Johanna White

For many children outdoor experiences are a natural part of growing up. Even with the increase of screen time, typically developing



Johanna & nephew Tommy

children do well and enjoy their encounters with nature. Many children with disabilities want to have the same opportunities that their typically developing peers have, but the nature of their physical, cognitive, medical or learning differences may hamper their participation. It is critical to provide special needs children with authentic experiences that help them actualize what they are learning in classrooms and through all forms of media.

For children with physical and developmental differences many

circumstances can influence their experiences in nature and lead to a variety of reactions. These reactions can range from ones of pleasure with enjoyable participation that the child wants to repeat, to ones that can cause significant anxiety that negates any future participation. Taking these children out of the classroom and into nature exposes them to sensory experiences in a positive way that can bring a deeper understanding of the information presented by various forms of media.

The preparation that is done before these children have an initial encounter in nature can make all of the difference in the world. Many educators and service providers are trained to anticipate what will be needed and will plan accordingly. The preparations for children with physical disabilities may seem more straightforward than say a child with emotional disorders or autism. When any child's regular routine



Johanna & Carol Moorman (Max McGraw's Granddaughter) at McGraw Wildlife

is disrupted, it causes some form of stress. Moving from a familiar environment of routine and comfort to one of new and different sights, sounds, smells and movement challenges can pose a higher level of discomfort for special needs children. The adults in these children's lives need to anticipate the environmental challenges for each child and problem solve opportunities for anxiety reducing conversations and sensory experiences in familiar surroundings to prepare the child for the trip into nature.

Meeting new people can be very intimidating, but a very important life skill for all children. Providing occasions for the children to meet or learn about the new people they will encounter, builds new strategies for interpersonal communication skills. With the right preparation and planning, children with special needs can more fully participate in the new and exciting adventure out in nature. Having the children relaxed and knowledgeable about what to expect, helps them focus on enjoying the positive aspects of the different physical, emotional or sensory stimulation that

they may be experiencing in a totally new environment. As these experiences increase, opportunities can be expanded to developing skills that could be adapted for older students as they transi-



Johanna, Some Strange Guy & Michelle of the YCA

tion into the work world and lifelong recreational activities.

Integrating experiences in nature into recreational opportunities for families with special needs children would be an opportunity for the very important transition of these children into adulthood. Families of children with impairments face a constant barrage of challenges. The word dauntless comes to mind as a descriptor. Day to day life demands constant strategizing to maximize the potential of a special needs child while parents are working, raising other children, maintaining a home, and often facing additional medical bills. It's no wonder these parents are exhausted. Finding the time, energy, and money to undertake the challenge of providing meaningful recreational activities for the whole family seems to be asking the impossible. Together with educational programs and other volunteer organizations, many parents strive to make sure their child is included in special educational and recreational endeavors. These experiences, though, typically don't carry over to the whole family and don't necessarily provide a foundation for lifelong enjoyable recreational activities. Helping families find opportunities to engage the entire family in activities out in nature opens a world of possibilities.

By offering special needs children environmental educational programs where their classrooms extend into nature, we start a process of widening opportunities for them to become comfortable and proficient in a number of environments. We expose them to environments that can be sensory comforting throughout their lives. We open up possibilities of employment and help them discover environments where they can engage with their families in lifelong recreational activities









Kids who fish are cool!!!





Finding a Way...

Bv: Chuck DiVito



Chuck's show of devotion to the YCA

Imagine a nice summer morning, the sun just coming up over the

trees, crisp fresh air, the sound of loons talking back and forth, and then you feel the thump of a nice fish tugging on your line. This is

something most of us here at the YCA have experienced. However, this is not something that most children in the world have experienced. Can you imagine never having the opportunity to be able to enjoy this sacred of events that most of us here at the YCA are lucky enough to be a part of? Well for a lot of kids and parents out there this experience has never happened or does not happen enough. Here is a way for all of us to stop and take time to share

these important times together and develop a lifetime of memories.

With tough economic times and our neverending list of things to do we find it hard to find the time and resources to enjoy the outdoors. However, with a little creativity and an open mind you

can surely develop a recipe for fun with your kids. One of the easiest ways to do this

is to research your local forest preserve district and check for nearby ponds or smaller lakes. Cabela's, Bass Pro Shops, Gander Mountain or Dick's Sporting goods are great places to start. These fine stores offer fishing rod and reel combos that are ready to go with rod, reel, line, hooks and bobbers. As for bait, this is another opportunity to create some fun and memories. On a dark summer night after a rainstorm, in any area with grass and dirt makes for the perfect worm hunt. Take your kids out and snatch up as many worms you can get. You can use a medium sizes cardboard box

Chuck produces another big Muskie for the kids



and but some dirt and leaves in it and you now have a portable

worm bed. Keep this with the worms in it in a cool dry place until

Captain Chuck Divito and his "crew" of YCA Kids



Chuck guiding some first timers to the Muskie hunt

Nothing beats girls catching big fish

of snacks. Take a trip to that nearby pond or small lake you researched and bring the poles and worms. Kids like nothing more than action. With the worms you can catch almost anything that swims. Almost all pan fish love worms! Most forest preserves off nice spaces where you can grab some shade under a tree, and set up your own little day-camp site. All of this activity combined pretty much makes for a perfect day with the family and it is certain to spark some interest in the outdoors for everyone.



Little Town "Big Impact"

By: Jim Onarheim - Mystic Moose Resort / Town of Moose Lake

About five years ago I met Kevin Bushnick at the Chicago Musky Show. Kevin and I were introduced to each other by a good friend of mine, Larry Ramsel. Larry is Hayward's very own musky historian and he is legendary as a Hayward area guide. There isn't too much that Larry doesn't know when it comes to musky fishing and it's no surprise that Kevin chose Larry to be his "guide-master" at these youth fishing events.

Kevin informed me that he wanted to have a youth musky event in the

Hayward area on a very good musky lake. Larry lived within one half mile of Moose Lake and fished the lake as a professional guide for many years. Larry felt that young kids just learning the sport of musky fishing should have pretty good luck with catching muskies of all sizes on Moose Lake.

Kevin and I talked several times at the show and after that about organizing the program on Moose Lake. My wife Barb and I

own Mystic Moose Resort on Moose Lake. Besides owning the resort, I also am past president and now Vice President of the Havward Lakes Visitor and Convention Bureau. Hayward has always been a major tourist destination spot in Northern Wisconsin. Hayward has always been a place when there is a constant schedule of events going on all year long. The American Birkiebeiner ski race draws over 10,000 skiers each February along with at least that many spectators to this small community. The Birkie is Hayward's largest annual event that we have and no matter where you go, most people have heard of the Birkie! Another huge annual attraction, is the World Lumberjack Champion-

ships held every July. This event also brings in thousands of people and competitors from around the world. Another event that we held this past January was the International Paralympics. This event drew athlete's from 18 different countries and was televised worldwide. This small little community in northern Wisconsin does a lot for big-event tourism in Wisconsin. In fact, tourism is the number one industry in the state.

One event that has really had an impact on this area is the Youth Musky Hunt which thanks to Kevin and his team, has turned out to be a very successful annual event for hundreds of young people form the age of 6-18 years old. This event continues to grow year after year and has caught the attention of many local people along with many people outside the area.

I think anytime you work with today's youth you will be a winner.



The main dock at The Mystic Moose

You will get the attention of many people because the youth of today are the men and women of our future. Life today is so complex & demanding on us. >From being expected to do more at our jobs every day or just needing to just keeping up with our daily requirements at home make it difficult to give our children the extra time and guidance that they may need. So when an event like the Youth Musky Hunt comes along it is so nice to get our children involved. This event shows and teaches our children about sportsmanship, competition, nature,

the outdoors & life in general. The children involved in this event can feel so special for this once in a life time experience. There are so many children in our cities that have never had the opportunity to even drive through the north woods. Most will never get the chance to see nature at its finest and so many children have sadly, never been fishing with a parent or relative. The Youth Musky Hunt gives the kids just that, an opportunity to do something won-

> derful in nature while at the same time being totally family oriented.

One thing about the Youth Musky Hunt that I have noticed, is the Hayward area residents have been so impressed with the number of people that want to help and teach these children what they can about the outdoors. Kevin has an unprecedented number of people who volunteer and support these programs. There has been so many positive comments not only from the Hayward area folks but also from people throughout the Midwest about this event. Traveling to sports shows, I hear people say all the time

that they have read or heard about our Youth Musky Hunt which I now refer to as, "the greatest show on earth."

so these children will have the time of their life. Kevin needs to be

commended for being such an excellent team leader in organizing

and heading up all of the YCA programs for our youth. Kevin sure has gotten the attention of many Hayward area residents with or-

ganizing the Youth Musky Hunt and other youth programs that he

this most valuable organization, The Youth Conservation Alliance.

Remember, it will not happen without your involvement!



has been involved with here in Hayward. There has always been plenty of positive conversation before and after the Youth Musky Hunt. This event has brought so many good people together. Everyone, please keep up the good work with all of the events that the YCA is involved with. Please keep supporting Kevin and

YCA Magazine 2015 Paae 23 5th Anniversary Edition

Remembering Grandpa (Johnson.

By: Sandie Johnson

February 5, 1935 - September 17, 2014



Allan Johnson - Round Lake June 2014

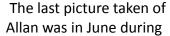


Grandpa & Grandma at the Youth Muskie Hunt

Allan was so proud to be a part of the YCA, having the opportunity to spend time with all of the children and to see them have fun and to be recognized for their dedication and accomplishments they worked so hard for.

Allan loved the YCA Youth Muskies Hunt and the outdoor camping program at the ICF

Center in Rockford. He also thoroughly enjoyed helping the kids at the McGraw Wildlife special needs kids fishing programs. It was at McGraw, Allan was able to walk around the pond with a cooler of water making sure nobody got thirsty!





Allan and Sandie Johnson

the 2014 Round Lake Youth Muskie Hunt in Hayward. He was trolling the waters checking to see what everyone was catching.

Words cannot express how much this man loved his family. He was so proud of his children and grandchildren.

We will miss you Grandpa J.

To everything there is a season, a time to every purpose under heaven.

A time to be born, and a time to die, a time to plant, and a time to plack up that which is planted:

A time to kill, and a time to heal, a time to break down, and a time to build up:

A time to weep, and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance.

Ecclesiastes 3:1-4 (KJV)



What a Difference a Year Makes

By: Mike Lynch

Kevin had approached me a little while ago about writing something for the newsletter and it's taken a while for me to think about how I'd approach it, as it's not your typical article for a YCA publication. As I was thinking about it though, the YCA was founded and chartered to give our youth experiences in the outdoors and appreciate what is available to them. My boys and I can relate to that.

In January, my wife Summer and I, and our two boys, Aiden & Dylan, had just finished what I would call a pretty good 18 months. Summer had been diagnosed with Stage 3 triple negative breast cancer in Sept 2011, and had gone through treatments for 9 months when she was declared cancer free in June 2012. We celebrated her 40th birthday with a huge party in July, and over the next 18 months, hit our bucket list hard – we went to Pebble Beach/Napa Valley for my 40th, we did a Disney cruise with the kids, went on an incredible 17 day National Park visit and saw the Badlands, Yellowstone, Grand Tetons, Glacier, & Theodore Roosevelt National Parks

(very relatable to YCA, and something I'd highly recommend to all families).

Summer had some surgeries to complete over that time, but with the last planned surgery completed in November 2013, we were feeling good about our life and optimistic about our future. In February though, Summer started feeling pain in her bones and after some tests and a rush trip up to Mayo, it was confirmed that the cancer had returned in her bones and liver. It was treatable but incurable, and we were told the average lifespan from diagnosis was 3 yrs. Our 'plan' was to take the 3 yrs and rely on advances in medicine to turn 3 to 5 and 5 to 10 and we were very fortunate to have been accepted in to a promising clinical trial.

Unfortunately, after 2 months, life threw us a curve and Summer's bone marrow had failed due to all the chemo and radiation treatments. Without an ability to create new platelets and blood cells, further treatment could not be given and in May, we went home to enjoy the time we had left. Summer passed away, quietly, the morning of June 23rd.

I didn't appreciate it at the time, but it was incredible how our friends, families and co-workers rallied to us in our time of need. Summer had an infectious personality and befriended everyone she met. Her outlook through the entire process was positive beyond any measure and she inspired many friends to do things they may not have done in seeing that life has no guarantees. I could write pages and pages on that part of

our journey, but all this history is really intended to provide perspective that life, and the present moment, need to be enjoyed.

So... what changed for the boys and I? Quite a bit did. But we challenged ourselves to not let Mom's passing destroy our

outlook on life. We openly talk about the good times with Mom and speculate what she is doing at that moment. Summer had a sense of humor and we're all pretty sure that if we stepped out of line, she would find some way of letting us know she was not happy. Taking a lesson from this experience that life is about your adventures, we've re-committed ourselves to the things we enjoy. I've taken on the Scoutmaster role for Aiden's troop and continue to be very active in Dylan's Cub Scout pack. That has been a great opportunity to bond with my sons and get out of the house and away from the electronics to enjoy time outdoors. We continue to spend a lot of time with friends and family and have made a number of plans for short and long trips to provide more depth and breadth of experiences and memories for all of us. We all decided that, while we miss Mom, we want to look at things positively - like

she did - and not let the small things get in the way of our happiness. Remember and learn from the past, prepare for the future, but make sure to enjoy the present.

Things are busy for us, with every night seemingly busy with Scouts, sports, confirmation, friends, etc, but we make sure we have enough downtime to talk, play games, or watch a movie. I've had time for self-reflection and have determined what makes me happy and what is important in my life at this time. I'd encourage everyone to take some time and think about that, as it can be not just enlightening, but also motivating. I set some ground rules for myself in terms of how much I'd work and when I would work.

I also outsourced as much as I could (i.e. lawn, nanny, etc) which allows me more time to spend with the boys, with friends, and doing things that I enjoy. While tragic, Summer's passing has allowed me to get closer to my boys and be a more active, and would say a better father to them. I think the YCA presents a great opportunity to further expose my boys to the outdoors and am looking forward to the next Youth Muskie Hunt weekend to give them a new experience that I bet will be remembered fondly. I haven't figured everything out yet, and 'new normal' is still evolving, but I feel the boys and I are in a good place emotionally and mentally and am very thankful for what we have been given and for the time we had with Summer. Her memory will endure and to take a phrase from her cancer fight: "Keep Calm and Summer On!"

Summer Lynch

























Those who teach...



















The Food Chain: Getting Back to the Basics

By: Michell Groves, Vice President

Even though there are a million complex interactions going on around you as you fish, most go unnoticed. At the YCA we see every outing as an opportunity to start unveiling these mysteries and immerse our participants in all the wonders the wild world has to offer. We really like understanding an aquatic food chain. Depending on where you are in the world, a food chain can change dramatically but the basics are still there.

Just fill in the specifics and you get the picture.

An example of this FOOD CHAIN would be: Sun -> Producer of plants) ->1st Consumer (herbivores) -> 2nd Consumer (omnivore/carnivore) -> 3rd Consumer (Omnivore/Carnivore sometimes an APEX PREDATOR) -> and Decomposers.

The MUSKIE FOOD CHAIN would be: SUN -> PLANTS/ALGAE -> PHYTO-PLANKTON/MACRO-INVERTEBRATES -> LITTLE FISH -> BIG FISH-> Decomposing material giving nutrients to water/soils/plants.

Apex predators are a species that is at the top of the food chain, but are significant to the health of an ecosystem. Why the science lesson?? Well this past fall the YCA participated in the releasing of over 1,000 young Muskies into Big Round Lake. We were able to take some great underwater video of this and received very positive feedback. We did however get some comments that releasing these predators to the waters will ruin the fishing of other species because they fear the Muskie will gobble-up all the other fish.

Here at the YCA we call this an educational moment! Muskie can



Testing water quality



Michelle teaching the YCA Kids how to study the lake ecosystem

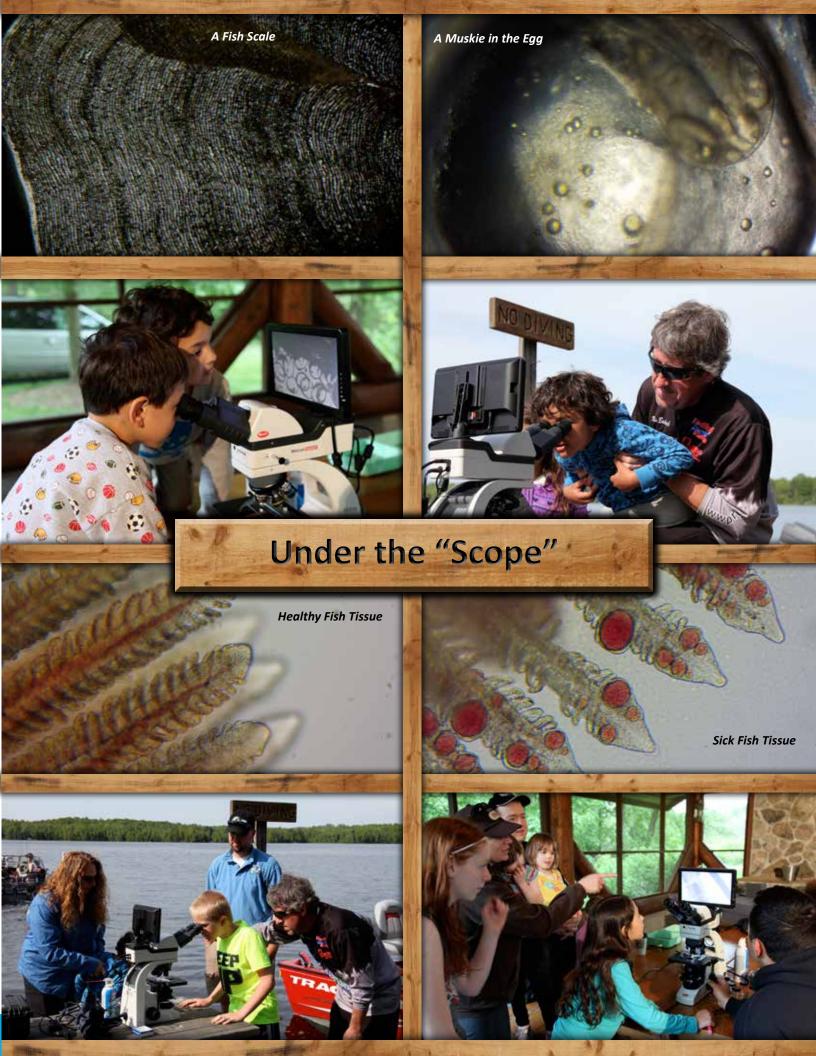


Michelle jumps right in for the kids

be considered Apex predators and are essential for the actual health of some aquatic ecosystems. One way they help is by keeping other faster growing predators from overpopulating and thus taking over and reducing desired fish populations.

First & Second consumer species always reproduce quicker, with first consumers being made up of many more species than second consumers. This allows the whole chain to flourish, plenty of food for all but not too much so that one species will dominate; this is the Apex Predators roll. They are the top dog and keep other species from taking over. Every species in an ecosystem has a job, or several jobs and each species kind of keeps the other in check. Removing Apex Predators or allowing numbers to be too small can be catastrophic to an ecosystem.

Interestingly enough, humans are the influencing factor in the balance of nature. We have been in large part responsible for the disruption of many food chains from their natural cycles. This can cause serious problems within some ecosystems. In order to try and make things right, the DNR and Fish and Wildlife Biologists get the difficult job of trying to fix these problems. Releasing Muskie into Big Round was a decision based on historical data and research and supporting this decision is supporting the entire fisheries of Round Lake. As conservationists it is our role to live among all species and contribute to the health and stewardship of our air, land and water. If the Muskie populations are stable we know the ecosystem is healthy and you can follow this all the way up the chain to us humans!





Our New Native American Friends

By: Kevin Bushnick, YCA Founder

This year at the Round Lake Youth Muskie Hunt, the Ojibwe Native Americans joined us for the first time. I'd like to share some interesting facts with you about these very special people.

The Lac Courte Oreilles Band of Lake Superior Chippewa are also

known as Ojibwe, and refer to themselves as Anishinaabe (original people).

Cathy Begay Waadookodaading School

Boozhoo and Aaniin are Ojibwe traditional hello greetings.

Many Hayward area lakes, including Round Lake, are stocked with fish from the Lac Courte Oreilles Reservation (LCO) fish hatchery, which they own and operate. The Ojibwe traditionally spear fish on Round Lake in the spring. The Walleye provide nourishment

after the long, cold winters when food is scarce. Not so well known is the fact that it is the Ojibwe alone who stock Round Lake with Walleye.

Fish, a natural, renewable resource, is becoming more valued as medical research recommends it for improved health.

All life is sacred to the Ojibwe. They acknowledge and honor their environment with ceremonies that include offerings, prayers, stories, songs, dance, and feasts. The most traditional activities at events are feasting and wearing their beautifully beaded floral



Charity Wilson and her up-and-coming fishermen

hand made regalia. An Ojibwe will feast and dress with gifts provided by the Creator. The four most sacred traditional foods are fish, venison (deer), wild rice, and berries. For powwows, they dress in deer hide and fabric

regalia decorated to reflect dreams, healing, visions, and traditional familial clan symbols. The Ojibwe language and culture is vast and deeply enriched with all that's necessary to live a good life on Mother Earth.

Today, the Ojibwe of Lac Courte Oreilles may be found in many areas of interest. They have over 78,000 acres of land to share with

about 3,000 people who live on the LCO reservation just outside of Hayward. Their total tribal enrollment is over 6,000 members and growing. There are three tribal schools on the Lac Courte Oreilles Reservation. The Ojibwe Community College, Lac Courte Oreilles Ojibwe Schools provides K-12 education and Waadookodaading, which provides preschool through fifth grade education all in the Ojibwe language. The Reservation is also home to the LCO Boys and Girls Club.

It is believed the dream catcher, hung over your head while sleeping, catches bad dreams. Traditionally they are made from red



Earth Day Pow Wow LCO Reservation

willow and sinew. For our Youth fishing event on Round Lake, the Native's hand-made a dream catcher for each of the children who

participated. The dream catchers were handed out during our recognition and achievement ceremony after the event.

We have so much to learn about the earth, its secrets and gifts. Let's learn what we can from our Ojibwe Native American friends in Hayward so we may enjoy and respect our time here fully.

On a personal note from YCA Founder Kevin Bushnick –

I have come to know many of the Ojibwe people including their tribal



Hand-made Dream Catcher

leader. They are a proud people but not arrogant. They are intelligent, kind, warmhearted and have a great sense of family. They also have a great sense of humor! The Ojibwe have been very supportive of everything the YCA is doing with the kids and if there's one thing I know for sure, I have a lot to learn from them.

Chi mügwetch (Big thank you!)

With Very Special Thanks...







Thank you Scott Reder - the grand master of YCA Lights and Audio.







Thank you Billy "Night Lens" - the king of all things video.









Thank you Sara - You are an artist who inspires so many.







Thank you Karen - your lifetime dedication to helping children is heart-warming.

