

Tight lines: Well worth fishing for a cancer cure

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How much is a fish worth? Not the one behind the meat counter at the grocery store, and not the one in the aquarium at the pet store.

Studies exist that show the economic value of wild or hatchery-raised fish to a state. Those numbers are interesting, but I'm thinking about a different kind of fish value.

There's the act of pursuing fish, which, at least in my mind, can be one of the best bonding family activities around. The memories of family trips are priceless.

Another value has come to mind as I prepare for the seventh annual Catch a Cure for Cancer Fishing Tournament, on June 23 at Starvation Reservoir.

The one-day bass and/or walleye tournament is all about compassion. The anglers at this tournament are raising money for children they have never met, and probably never will.

Proceeds from the annual fishing tournament are given to Camp Hobe (www.camphobekids.com), a summer outdoors program offered to children ages 4-19 with cancer, and their siblings.

Carri and Jerry Schlieff started the tournament in 2001, partly as a way to honor Carri's brother, who passed away from cancer, and in part as a way to unite the angling community. It is a fun way to benefit a worthy cause.

They raised \$5,900 that first year, and set a new high for the event last year, raising more than \$17,000. All told, the Schlieffs and the anglers who support the event have given more than \$70,000 to kids with cancer, also giving them a chance to get away from the sterile environments they are accustomed to, but still secure in the knowledge that medical supervision is available if needed.

The top finishing teams in both the bass and walleye sides of the tournament are given a check for placing. The majority of those winning anglers hand the check, along with the other money raised, right back to the Schlieffs.

I hear the walleye fishing at Starvation is picking up, with fish in the 2-4 pound range fairly common and some bigger 'eyes being landed.

There's always room for more boats at the tournament, Jerry said, so visit catchacureforcancer.com/ and sign up. The entry fee is \$120 per boat, to fish either the bass or the walleye side of the tournament. Anglers can fish both sides for a fee of \$240. There is also a \$20 fee for each of the optional big fish (bass or walleye) contests.

It's always an honor to compete in this tournament. This will be my fifth go at placing in the money. Roy Hawk, my three-time fishing partner for the tournament, and I pulled a rabbit out of our hat last year, landing four keeper bass in the last hour of the tournament.

We ended up finishing fifth, a far cry from the past couple of years when we were so embarrassed to show the others the fish we landed we ended up letting them go before the weigh-in.

Hope to see you at Starvation on June 23.

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