

Friday, September 10, 2021

Chicago Police and Firefighters Help Local Youths Catch Their First Fish

Chicago, ILL. —Seventy-five youths and their families lined the banks of the lagoon at Chicago's Columbus Park alongside volunteers from Chicago Fire Fighters Local 2, Chicago Police Sergeant's Association, Black Fire Brigade and New Concept Benefit Group at the first Chicago Fish with a First Responder event.

"Most of the kids had never fished before. You could see on their faces how much they enjoyed getting out and not having to worry about everything else going on in the city—just to be kids again," said Jim Calvino, president of the Chicago Police Sergeant's Association. "Plus, fishing teaches kids that patience can be rewarding."

The idea for the free community event came about when Doug Aller, vice president of New Concept Benefit Group, saw photos of an outreach event with first responders on the Union Sportsmen's Alliance (USA) website in 2019 and connected with USA staff.

"We are a financial company that serves police officers and fire fighters, and this seemed like a perfect opportunity to bring first responders and members of the community together in a fun environment where they could get to know each other on a personal level as neighbors," Aller said. "And it got kids out from behind the computer screen to interact with one another."

Each of the young anglers received a free fishing rod and reel, thanks to the USA and its partnership with Humana, to ensure everyone had the chance to participate and continue fishing for years to come.

Joe Senorski, director of political action for Fire Fighters Local 2, volunteered with his 13-year-old son, an avid young angler who helped teach fellow youths and an adult to fish at the event.

"Day in and day out, we deal with the citizens of Chicago, and it's usually a negative situation – a fire, when someone has to go to the hospital, or after an accident," Senorski said. "It's great when we can interact with people in a positive environment and give back."

Quention Curtis, a Chicago firefighter and president of the Black Fire Brigade, echoed that sentiment. "The Brigade is a community-based organization designed around taking kids off the street and putting them in public safety," he said, "and we thought this was a chance to bring the police and fire departments together to help build camaraderie in the community and let people know we are there for them not only in the bad times, but also in the good."

The event was the latest in series of free youth outreach activities held as part of Work Boots on the Ground – the USA's flagship conservation program—that support the organization's mission to unite the union community through conservation to preserve North America's outdoor heritage.

"Urban events like this provide opportunities for youths and their families to experience all the outdoors have to offer as well as the knowledge and tools to continue to pursue fishing on their own," said USA Executive Director and CEO Scott Vance.



Union Sportsmen's Alliance (USA): The USA is a union-dedicated, 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization whose members hunt, fish, shoot and volunteer their skills for conservation. The USA is uniting the union community through conservation to preserve North America's outdoor heritage. For more information, visit www.unionsportsmen.org or connect on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#).

Work Boots on the Ground (WBG): WBG is the USA's flagship conservation program that brings together union members willing to volunteer their time and expertise to conservation projects that improve and enhance public access to the outdoors, conserve wildlife habitat, restore America's parks and mentor youth in the outdoors. The USA's Work Boots on the Ground program works closely with federal, state and local agencies and other conservation groups to provide manpower needed to complete critical projects that may otherwise go undone.

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