


Take a Kid Fishing


Much like the fishing season, our Sea Grant outreach really starts to pick up in the spring. We say that Ohio Sea Grant's programming spans from "K to Gray", meaning that we reach young kids to seniors and everyone in between, highlighting the importance of Lake Erie and wise use of its resources. While I enjoy working with all age groups, working with youth is particularly impactful and rewarding. They are full of energy and great questions, and excited to learn new things that they'll carry with them for the rest of their lives.


Even when I work with adults, I end most of my presentations with this slide:





Take a Kid Fishing!


Questions?
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I try to do that myself as much as possible, both professionally and personally. I take my own kids and nephews out whenever I can. They're the kids in that slide. This is one of my favorite pictures:



OHIO 4-H SEA CAMP

My daughter (who was 7 at the time) caught that 27" Walleye 100% on her own on a Mickey Mouse pole. To be honest, I probably would have helped her, but I assumed she had a Freshwater Drum since she was casting a Tiny Teaser in the shallow rocks mid-day in mid-summer. When I asked if she wanted to let it go, she asked "Can we eat it?" Those real-life experiences can turn kids into anglers for life.

For work, yesterday I presented at a 5th grade STEM club where we talked about the aquatic food web, picked through macroinvertebrates, tied fishing lures, and filleted a fish. Next week I'll be in a high school where I'll help them harvest yellow perch they've grown all year, teach them how to fillet, and then they'll have an in-class fish fry. This June includes a couple of day camps where we'll provide the fishing equipment and instruction, as well as [4H Sea Camp on Kelleys Island](#), and [the Lake Erie Sport Fishing Course at Stone Lab](#). These programs will reach hundreds of kids, many of whom will catch and clean their first fish! I'm looking forward to making memories, and hopefully more life-long anglers.

Ultimately, getting kids involved in fishing is an investment towards the future. Not only is it rewarding for you, but outdoor recreation has been shown to have many health benefits. It can reduce stress, get them a break from screens and social media, and keep them busy and out of trouble.

It also makes good business sense. You could consider marketing your charters as family friendly. Offering a discount for kids under a certain age could attract new clients. Reminding potential customers that kids less than 16 years old don't need a fishing license in Ohio may increase interest as well. The Ohio Division of Wildlife is offering Free Fishing Days again this year to Ohio residents on June 14-15, so that could be a prime weekend to get families on board that may otherwise not pay for a family's worth of licenses.

Turning kids into anglers also means there will be a bigger pool of prospective charter clients. And once they are 16, they will purchase a license which directly funds conservation efforts through the Division of Wildlife, including fisheries management. Anglers are some of the best stewards of our natural resources, so having a large group of young Lake Erie stewards could lead to an even healthier and more productive Lake Erie. You may even open their eyes to a job in the charter industry, fisheries management, or other Lake Erie related professions.

Make it a goal to take a kid fishing this year. Even better, try multiple times this season. Fishing with kids may take a bit of extra patience, but it's well worth it!



PS: Speaking of that K to Gray programming, we will be hosting the Charter Captain Day at Stone Lab event again this year on August 27. There is limited space available, so keep an eye out for registration information later this spring/summer. We hope to see you there!