



NEWS RELEASE

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Chicago Trout Unlimited Chapter Awarded Bass Pro Shops and Cabela's Outdoor Fund Grant for "Trout in the Classroom" Conservation Program

Bass Pro Shops and Cabela's Outdoor Fund has awarded a financial grant to support the Oak Brook chapter of Trout Unlimited with its purchase of an aquarium set-up for schools and 2020 program-wide support for its "live bugs" entomology classes at other Chicago area participating schools.

"We are excited to be selected to participate in this hands-on coldwater conservation program," said Michael Youngberg, sixth-grade teacher responsible for environmental programming at Percy Julian Middle School in Oak Park; this year's Trout in the Classroom grant recipient. "We want our middle school students to be advocates for the environment and understand how coldwater fisheries fit into our planet's important ecosystems."

Trout in the Classroom Over Two Decades Old

"Trout in the Classroom" started 20 years ago as a national Trout Unlimited grass roots environmental education program in which students in grades K-12 learn to raise trout from eggs to fry, monitor tank water quality, engage in stream habitat study, learn to appreciate water resources, begin to foster a conservation ethic, and grow to understand ecosystems. Most six-month programs end the school year by releasing their trout in a state-approved stream near the school or within a nearby coldwater watershed.

The Oak Brook Trout Unlimited "Trout in the Classroom" program requires a standard 55-gallon tank set-up, filter system, chiller, water pump, and gravel. The program is licensed by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR), and each individual school and teacher is permitted by the state to rear trout. During the year, each teacher tailors the program to fit their curricular needs.

Conservation Program Provides Individual School Flexibility

"The beauty of the Trout in the Classroom program is its flexibility for each teacher," said Mr. Strauch. "We have had participating school programs ranging from 4th grade through 12th grade AP Biology. However, right now, most of our programs are in 6th through 8th grades. Personally, I think that is the sweet spot for our program. The students are far enough along in their education to understand what we are presenting. We are now in our 12th year of this environmental education program. Over 6,000 students have participated in the chapter's program since its Chicago area launch 12 years ago."

"As Trout Unlimited leaders, we know that the future of our continued success is the next generation of conservation stewards we inspire to take care of our rivers and streams long after we are gone," said Mr. Strauch. "And our Trout in the Classroom initiative is one of the three youth education programs Oak Brook Trout Unlimited supports along with our annual Youth Fly Fishing Classes and summer Illinois Youth Conservation and Fly Fishing Camp."



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Bass Pro Shops and Cabela's Outdoors Commitment

Guided by the visionary leadership of Bass Pro founder, Johnny Morris, the Outdoor Fund empowers Bass Pro Shops and Cabela's Outdoor Fund 200 million annual customers to support conservation efforts by rounding up their purchases. Rallying passionate customers alongside dedicated team members, industry partners and leading conservation organizations like Trout Unlimited, Bass Pro is creating North America's largest conservation movement to collectively shape the future of the outdoors and all who love it for generations to come.

The Bass Pro Shops and Cabela's Outdoor Fund grant covers the expense for the program's set up of one aquarium and annual April visit to other participating schools by Minnesota entomologist Dean Hansen who brings his "live bug" collection for his students to hold, inspect and identify by species.

To learn more about its "Trout in the Classroom" program as well as other conservation and youth fly fishing programs, visit the Oak Brook Trout Unlimited chapter's website: obtu.org

About Oak Brook Trout Unlimited

Oak Brook Trout Unlimited is dedicated to conserving, protecting and restoring coldwater fisheries and their watersheds in the Midwest. The Oak Brook Chapter is comprised of over 1,200 members from Chicago's western and south suburbs and downstate Illinois and is part of the national Trout Unlimited organization (www.tu.org). Oak Brook Trout Unlimited fulfills its mission through advocacy and education efforts regarding the impact of pollution and soil erosion on water-based ecosystems, and by engaging volunteers in hands-on projects to improve and rehabilitate coldwater river systems. For more information about Oak Brook Trout Unlimited, visit www.obtu.org.



Caption: Bolingbrook Bass Pro Shops Store Manager Marty Nealon (right) presents a Bass Pro Shops and Cabela's Outdoor Fund financial grant to Marvin Strauch (left) and Willie Beshire (center) of the Oak Brook chapter of Trout Unlimited. The grant will pay for the purchase of an aquarium set-up for a local school and 2020 program-wide support for its "live bugs" entomology classes at other Chicago area participating schools.



Caption: The Percy Julian School in Oak Park was selected as the 13th Chicago area school for the "Trout in the Classroom" program sponsored by the Oak Brook chapter of Trout Unlimited. Michael Youngberg, sixth-grade teacher responsible for environmental programming at Percy Julian Middle School in Oak Park, poses with students in front of the 55-gallon aquarium and recently hatched brown trout.