

Hundreds will throw in a line at fishing derby

Catfish stocked for annual Waukegan Park District event

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What's the lure of the 26th Annual Fishing Derby at Bevier Park in Waukegan Saturday? Free catfish, freedom from having to buy a fishing license and family members having a chance to win prizes for the largest fish in different age categories.

"The Fishing Derby is a family tradition. We see the same families and groups attend year after year and have photos to prove their fishing abilities," said Theodora Anderson, manager of community relations for the Waukegan Park District.

"Because it is a family affair, we have seen infants to older seniors," Anderson added. "Attendance is diverse and reflects the community."

The park district has stocked the pond at 2255 W. Yorkhouse Road with several hundred pounds of catfish in varying sizes, and because this event falls within the four days of Free Fishing Days from June 17-20 as declared by the Illinois Department of

Natural Resources, no fishing licenses are needed to participate.

Anderson says anglers should register ahead of time because the park district has been drawing hundreds to the event in recent years. Last year, there were 370 entrants. Only one pole per person is allowed, and there are poles to borrow on a first-come, first-served basis with an ID. The fees for pre-registering for the derby are \$3 for kids ages 12 and under and \$5 for everyone else. Registration on the day of the derby is \$5 and \$7, respectively. Call 847-360-4300 to register.

Registration starts at 7:30 a.m., and participants can grab their favorite spot at 7 a.m.. The derby starts at 8:30 a.m. and runs through 10:30 a.m., when a horn will sound to end the event, but people often stay and picnic.

"The same woman enters the pond first," Anderson said about some of the traditions that have developed over the years. "She always preregisters and arrives well before 5 a.m., often as early as 4 a.m., to be the first in line and therefore first to the pond. She has a favorite lucky fishing spot.

"People make a morning or day of fishing and enjoy-



WAUKEGAN PARK DISTRICT

This young lady shows off the bait she was using at the 2015 Waukegan Park District annual Fishing Derby at Bevier Park. The 2016 edition is scheduled for Saturday.

ing the park," she added. "Some pitch tents or bring umbrellas. There are plenty of coolers and picnicking throughout the park. The fishing derby turns into a day at the park for many families."

Prizes are awarded for the largest fish by length in the following age categories — 4 years old and younger; 5 to 8; 9 to 12; 13 to 16; and 17 and older. Fishing equipment, picnic and camping items are the prizes.

"All have fun because the pond is usually stocked with about 800 pounds of

catfish a few days before the event, so there is a lot of action (and) competition, and people can keep what they catch," said Anderson. "Those fishing get to have bragging rights about the best section of the pond to catch a fish, share stories from previous years, and talk about the best bait to use."

Anderson added that "an extended family can usually leave with 20 or more fish" if luck is on their side.

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