



Wayne Guider, Hudson River Fisherman volunteer, wounded warrior veteran, and his daughter in foreground at Billy Joe's Rib Works, Newburgh, NY



The cry of "GET THE NET" is usually followed by one of the HRFA members reaching down and scooping up a fish far to big to lift over the rail without help. It also brings all eyes to the young fisherman which is exactly what we intended it to do.



The huge crowd on the deck of Billy Joe's Rib Works the day of the Wounded Warrior Catfish Derby

Each time we have a Children's Catfish Contest at Billie Joe's Rib Works they get better in terms of total enjoyment by everyone involved. Maybe it is the location, practically child proof, maybe it is the wonderful enthusiasm of Joe Mallie manager and his staff, and maybe it is the volunteers from the HRFA but for all of the above, including a beautiful day to be fishing, this group of wounded warrior veterans and their families all had a wonderful day!

Every child that attended caught at least one catfish. In addition there was a 12 lb. carp caught, numerous striped bass, and a few perch as well. If you have never attended one of these than I must tell you the terrific satisfaction that I and all the volunteers get out of seeing children, along with their parents catching their first fish. For sure this is a memory that will stay with them the rest of their lives. It is amazing to me to see how different children react to fishing. Some "get it" right away, others may take a couple of caught fish to realize that they, no one else but them, is accomplishing something on their own. They are flying away from the nest for the first time.

These contests are really participatory events by all that give a child a real life experience in doing "something" without a smart phone in their hands. For the volunteers from the Hudson River Fisherman's Association the experience of volunteering to provide fishing rods, bait, tackle and most of all experience is all that matters. I remember twenty years ago when there were children fishing contests a child

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brought his or her own rod, was told to "go catch a fish" and left on their own. The HRFA experience is a far cry from that as each volunteer is trained to "jump in" and help the child catch a fish almost immediately.

You can be sure that there will be many more of these childrens and adults catfish contest on the Hudson River in the near future.

Ms Nancy Beetstra, Alumni specialist, Wounded Warrior Project is a 9 year Marine Corp member, (now released) wounded in Iraq. She is married with a one year old child, and is a full time paid member of the Wounded Warrior Project. Her responsibility includes thirty one hundred wounded veterans in her district. She works out of the New York office of the Wounded Warrior Project in New York City.

Nancy Beetstra, Alumni Specialist, Wounded Warrior Project, and the children with their prize fishing rods, tackle boxes and other gear they won (the prizes were provided by the Wounded Warrior Project)

