

NOW YOU GO TO COLLEGE TO GET YOUR "GRASSROOTS" DEGREE!

by John H. Vargo, Publisher

It used to be that many a child would go to their grandparents when they were old enough to walk to get a basic understanding of what life is all about! That included fishing, hunting, trapping, and how to operate a boat. These children were perfectly capable of handling the boat and going fishing by the time they were twelve years old.



The grandparent was proud to show the children what a wonderful life they had and very happy to pass on the skills they had learned.

For the majority of today's children this is not happening! Because of the huge percentage of young couples that have broken up, or moved away from where the grandparents live, the children are not getting the basic education they traditionally received. Those of us who recognize this are desperately trying to bring these children into what we feel is a wonderful way of life. A good example of what can be done is the HRFA!

The Hudson River Fishermen's Association, for the past 40 years has been a staunch advocate of teaching children what fishing is all about. In the recent past the children's catfish contests, which are held in various parts of the Hudson River, are a good example of teaching children the basics of fishing. The concept of using catfish as the target fish is excellent, as they are extremely easy to catch and can provide the same joy to the child that any other fish.

Many of the children that attend one of the HRFA Catfish Contests receive a fishing rod and reel of good quality to take home. That memory will stick with them forever.

One example of this was the catfish contest sponsored by Billy Joe's Rib Works last August. One mother and her son walked 4 miles in the heat, from a motel, so that the child could catch a fish. Needless to say the child caught a few catfish and went home with a rod and reel. Interestingly enough, when the HRFA volunteers, men and woman heard about the long walk, that the mother and child took to get to Billy Joe's Rib Works, one of the HRFA volunteers drove her back to the motel.

It brought tears to a number of our volunteer's eyes to see how eager these children were for their new rod and reel at the end of the day. It was very hot on the deck that day but the children will never forget catching fish and going home with a rod and reel.

Another wonderful event was the Croton Yacht Clubs River Day. The Commodore, Dennis Kooney, and his crew of volunteers really "get it" as the focus of the day is on children and educating them as to what the Hudson River has to offer. Here is a positive event, with plenty of children designed displays including, color books, toy sailboats, fish tanks with actual species of fish caught that morning in the tanks that are on display. This years Croton Yacht Club event is September 9th, 2017 11 am to 4 pm.

Again, the HRFA was the focus of the day with a catfish contest for children. The HRFA volunteers provided rods, reels and bait, as well a very patient volunteers, who untangled lines, baited hooks and smiled all the time they were doing it. Many children caught fish, and went home with a tackle box, and a new rod and reel. These are the kind of memories that will last forever.

The truly sad part about this is that there are so few volunteers who are acting as parents to children that have the skills to teach fishing, in this case, and hunting and boating in many others.

In this day and age of "playing it safe," most organizations hire individuals with a rock-solid college education, that have no skills whatsoever in the basic grassroots abilities of fishing, hunting, and boating that the older generation still possesses

Without teaching the children these basic skills our way of life will fade away quickly.