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Contact Stacy Morse: (573) 751-3599

Teach a St. Louis Child to Fish and Make His/Her Summer

Parents know that if you don't give your child activities this summer, they are going to end up playing video games, running up your phone bill, or causing trouble. That's why I am excited to share the news about the free Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) Program that encourages kids seven to 15 years old to drop a line at four St. Louis area conservation lakes. It's called "GO FISH!" and it's a wonderful way to get kids outdoors.

According to the MDC, the "GO FISH!" Program offers seven classes called "hooks" at four St. Louis-area conservation lakes: Bellefontaine Conservation Area (North County), Forest Park (St. Louis City), Suson Park (South County) and August A. Busch Conservation Area (St. Charles). At the end of each class, kids get free fishing equipment. By the time they graduate, they have a tackle box, lures, pliers, a rod/reel combo and a booklet of all the public places to pursue their own local fishing adventures. The objective is to increase kids' awareness of their surroundings and breed future stewards of the environment.

The MDC started the St. Louis Urban Fishing Program in 1969 as a pilot project with the City of St. Louis at five St. Louis City lakes. The purpose of the program was to provide close-to-home fishing opportunities for St. Louis-area anglers. Through the 1980s, the program was expanded to include cooperative management at 27 lakes within St. Louis City, St. Louis County, Ballwin and Ferguson.

The Urban Fishing Program consists of two major components: stocking harvestable-sized fish in park lakes and management of educational fishing lakes for urban children. All park lakes receive regular stockings of channel catfish (March through September), while eight urban lakes are stocked with trout during the winter. Since 1969, the MDC has raised or purchased more than 2.3 million pounds of fish, valued at \$1.4 million for stocking into St. Louis urban lakes.

For more details or to donate to this worthy cause, visit www.friendsofgofish.com, or look for Fish Saint Louis on Facebook. To register for a class, call the MDC directly at 636-441-4554. For more information and the location of urban fishing lakes and ponds, contact the MDC St. Louis Regional Office at 636-441-4554 or visit <http://mdc.mo.gov/areas/stlouis/fish/fishing/lakes>.

Photos courtesy of the Missouri Department of Conservation. For full resolution, please contact Senate Communications at (573) 751-3824.

