

Fishing From The Heart

Angling For Angels

By John Gallagher, Contributions by Sandra Jack

Taking a kid fishing has taken on a whole new meaning. Angling for Angels, an organization based here in Jacksonville, is dedicated to not only taking a child fishing, but also to teaching children about our fishery and introducing them at an early age to the joy brought to one's life through fishing and the outdoors. Partnered with the Make-A-Wish Foundation, they also plan to make several "fish wishes" come true and have many upcoming events planned that benefit the Northern Florida charity.

Where did it begin? The founder, Sondra Jack, fell in love with saltwater fishing after moving to Florida from Kentucky in 1990. At age 15, she spent every free moment on the



ABOVE: Haven Jack dreams of becoming a professional angler.

water targeting both inshore and offshore species. Her passion led her to compete in cobia and billfish tournaments while still in high school and redfish tournaments through last year. This love for fishing only grew stronger as she became a mother and was able to share her passion with her children. Sondra felt compelled

to share this beautiful bonding experience with others, and shortly thereafter Angling for Angels was born early in 2006.

After moving to Jacksonville last year, Sondra teamed up with one of the area's local fishing celebrities, Capt. Scott Guthrie. Since then, with the combined efforts of both Sondra and Scott, the organization has grown tremendously. By enlisting other Angling Angels trustees, they are steadily raising money for the Make-A-Wish Foundation of Northern & Central Florida. Additionally, they are organizing charity fishing tournaments throughout Florida and recently launched the "Fish-For-A-Wish" program, a program that Sondra holds dear to her heart.

Through their non-profit "Fish-For-A-Wish" program, Angling for Angels hopes to reach thousands of youth. They have already made a difference for some very deserving children involved with the "Make-A-Wish" Foundation, and are working to fulfill all of the young children's fishing dreams. Later this year, several of the children and their families will be participating in a weekend fishing expedition, compliments of Capt. Scott Guthrie along with some of his peers in the Redfish Tour. The children and their families will be staying in Jacksonville and will enjoy the beautiful local fisheries for an entire weekend. During their visit the children will learn about managing our existing marine fisheries, receive one-on-one

instruction, and experience a fishing trip of a lifetime. Finally, each child will go home with not only a dream-come-true, but also a gift pack sure to help them remember the special occasion.

"I'm most excited about our "Fish-For-A-Wish" program because I truly feel it's an opportunity to change a child's life. Some children never have the chance to hold a fishing rod in their hand, let alone have one of country's top professional anglers teach and guide them through the entire process. I know this will be a very positive experience for both the children and their families," said Sondra.

Angling for Angels is planning several more of these fishing expeditions as well as a charity fishing tournament throughout the upcoming 2008-2009 years.

Would you like to help? Angling for Angels invites you to get involved! Whether it be monetary contributions donated to the silent auctions or various tournaments/promotional events, all efforts to participate are welcome. All manner of donations such as lures, tackle, sunglasses, etc. are all very much appreciated and help fulfill a much needed and appreciated void to those involved with the "Fish-For-A-Wish" program.

If you would like to support this charity on a permanent basis and help the youth of our local areas become part of a fishing revolution by becoming a recipient of Angling Angels, you are invited to donate a small monetary contribution, please visit www.anglingforangels.com to make an online donation or call us at (904) 647-7995 to speak to one of our staff angels. All participants receive a beautiful shirt and patch and are included in any community organization events calendar along with special note in various local publications and event notices.

Visit www.anglingforangels.com or call (904) 647-7995 more details.

To learn more about Angling For Angels go to www.anglingforangels.com. Scott can be reached at (904) 316-1026 or captainscottguthrie@gmail.com.

BELOW: Wade Jack concentrates on his next big catch.



ST JOHNS BONANZA



ABOVE: Nicholas Sanson, snagging a nice flounder by the Buckman Bridge with Capt. Jim Anderson.

During August, we know how hot it gets in NE Florida. The good news is the fishing is just as hot if you spend some time in the right places. Fish are just like us when it comes to the heat; they look for places where it is cooler. For the fish, this means deeper water and shade. The St Johns River south of downtown Jacksonville has just what the fish are looking for.

A wide variety of saltwater inshore species can be caught around the bridges, channel edges and docks, all of which can be found in the southern section of the St Johns. Bridges such as the Ortega, Buckman, Doctors Inlet and Shands all will hold fish. You will find the fish deep just inside the current eddies formed by the structure. Both live bait and artificials can bring success. By far, a live shrimp is the best all around live bait with small mullet and pogies getting the job done as well. If you prefer artificials, a grub jig or 3" swim bait such as a Storm Wild Eyed Shad will produce. By working your lure near the bottom, you will feel the hit. Most of the fish will be yellowmouth and speckled trout with an occasional redfish, flounder, drum, sheepshead and striper mixed in.

Another great way to fish the bridge is to float rig a live shrimp under the bridge. The big advantage to a float rig is that it allows you to adjust the depth of your bait with a slip knot on your main line. Now you to cast the rig without having 10 feet of line under your float. When adjusting the slip knot, you will want to set the depth of the bait a foot or so off the bottom. A circle hook works great on float rigs since when the float disappears; all you have to do is start reeling without setting the hook.

The St Johns has a number of drops along the channel edge. These drops will hold yellowmouth trout, redfish, drum and croaker. Fresh dead shrimp (not frozen) fished on a fishfinder rig on the edge of the drop will get the bite. A piece of fresh cut mullet, ladyfish or even croaker is also a good choice. This style of fishing is great for kids and novice anglers since it does not require a lot of casting skill. Many times, you will find a small group of boats near a channel marker. Just find your place and join in on the fun.

There are many, many docks along the river. However, some docks will hold more fish than others. Why? Fish tend to prefer older docks, ones that have a lot of shade and ones near points with good current flow. Older docks have developed their own marine habitat, much like an artificial reef offshore. Barnacles, crabs and other marine life will attract redfish, drum, sheepshead and trout. During the heat of summer, docks with platforms near the water will produce the greatest amount of shade. Fish will hold under the dock where it is cooler. When fishing docks, a live or fresh dead shrimp on a Sure Catch jighead or fishfinder rig placed tight to the dock will get the attention of whoever is home. The key is to "dead stick" it. Meaning, don't move it. This will allow the scent to travel down current under the dock bringing the fish to your bait. Another method is to use a small float such as a Cajun Thunder with a live shrimp underneath. Let the current drift the rig to and under the dock. When a fish hits, get him out from the dock as quickly as possible or you risk having your line cut by the many barnacles on the pilings.

August is also the time of year when the shrimp are running and are a prime forge for all inshore species. A cast net with 3/8" mesh in at least 6' length will catch the shrimp. Many folks modify their nets with webbing or duct tape attached just above the lead line. This allows the net to stay open as it sinks in deepwater catching more shrimp. Some of the traditional shrimp spots are the Ortega bridge, Doctors Inlet and Mandarin Point. Just look for the boats throwing nets in these areas and you have found the spot.

This time of year, plan your trips during the morning hours as the thunderstorms build during the afternoon. The St Johns can be a nasty place when the wind kicks up so small skiffs should always keep safety in mind. Get out and enjoy what opportunities we have right out of our own backdoor.

Jim Anderson Byline - Capt. Jim Anderson is a professional guide as well as a weekly contributor to the Outdoors Show and can be reached at Fish

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