

# Reel life poses real Challenge

## *Media fish to help at-risk youth*

**M**Y boss let me get up at 5 yesterday morning so I could go fishing.

Now hold on, it's not the dream job you think. I almost never get up that early. I almost never fish.

But once a year I'm part of a crack *Free Press* fishing team that takes to the Red and Assiniboine rivers to prove we're the best anglers in the biz. We have yet to succeed.

The event is the Fish Winnipeg Media/Corporate Challenge. The bureaucratic name doesn't tell you that this event is much more than a

chance for media to flex their rods. The event is the publicity arm of an urban angling program that teaches at-risk youth the joys of fishing right in our city.

Each summer for the past four years a van has picked up a handful of kids, given them a rod and reel to keep and taken them down to our rivers. There the kids learn you don't have to own a cruiser in the Whiteshell to enjoy a relaxing pastime.

This summer alone the program taught 600 inner-city youth all the angles on angling. The unique program

— encompassing the city, the province and private corporate partners — uses the annual fishing derby as a way to promote the cause and raise money. Yesterday's event — the fifth one — was expected to reel in \$10,000 to cover this year's program.

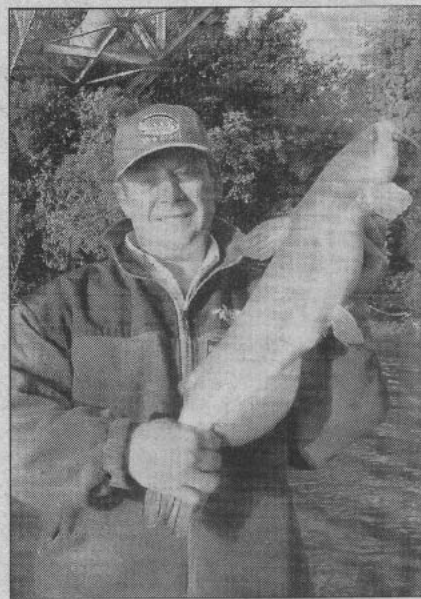
*Free Press* art director Gord Preece and myself have participated since the beginning. I don't even recall how I became involved, seeing as I have little fishing experience. Gord is the angler and relishes these annual excursions.

While the media were forced from their beds, the corporate challenge — where businesses pay to go out and fish — ran yesterday afternoon. In the sun. When it was warm.

Gord and I sat in a boat in the dark at 6 a.m. It was 11 C outside. It warmed to a balmy 12 C by the time fishing ended at 8:30 a.m.

Luckily, we had Ken Rey in our boat. The beauty of this derby is that each team is given an experienced fishing guide. Ken baited our hooks, captained the boat, found the right fishing spot and tolerated the inexperience of the crew. ("Ewww, those look icky, Ken. Can you put them on the hook?")

It's a luxurious setup and reminded me of that old ABC-TV Curt Gowdy series, *The American Sportsman*, where celebrities fished in exotic places. OK, so a morning with me and Gord isn't as exciting as fly fishing with William Shatner. And you might



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**Expert fisherman Ken Rey holds catfish that Gord Preece reeled in.**

not think of Winnipeg as exotic, but from the river, the city looks mighty fine.


Gord said that's one of the things that keeps bringing him back to the boat — the great view of the city.

"More Winnipeggers should get to see this," he said.

Gord didn't look at the scenery too long, though, because he was busy reeling in fish. We caught 12 altogether, but Gord got more than half and also the biggest catches of the boat, including a 28-inch channel catfish.

The *Free Press* came in fourth. For the record, The A-Channel won this year's event.

Which means I'll be back next year to try and get the fishing crown. Maybe I'll even practise a little before. Fishing season is still open, after all. I'll just go ask the boss for some more time off.

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**Paul McKie**