

# Fishing philanthropy in action in Winnipeg next week

By Ben Graham

AS a kid, I was fortunate to have a borderline fanatical fisherman as a father. This gave me the opportunity to be introduced to the sport, and have the means for what seemed to be unlimited opportunities to go fishing.

While I was lucky, the truth is that countless youth simply don't have that chance. Fish Winnipeg is a volunteer group that works to raise money for youth angling programs to give kids a chance to be introduced to the sport of fishing, as well as be taught how to do it properly and ethically.

Over the past 10 years, Fish Winnipeg has raised over \$150,000 aimed towards angling programs for at-risk youth.

This includes the free Van Fishing Program, where a staff member of Fish Winnipeg picks up kids at various community centres and provides transportation and fishing advice

once they hit the rivers.

Kids who enter the programs receive a free rod and reel. Fish Winnipeg gives away approximately 600 of these per year.

"Fish Winnipeg started when a few people in the fishing community, including people from the province and the city, decided that the good fishing available right in the city should be promoted and that kids, and in particular kids at risk, should be introduced to urban fishing and at the same time learn the principles of preserving the resource," said John Toone, co-chair of Fish Winnipeg.

Winnipeg has so much to offer in the urban angling department. With both the Red and the Assiniboine Rivers flowing directly through the city, there is a plethora of parks and river access points to fish from.

As for what inhabits the waters of the Red and Assiniboine, you certainly can't beat the variety of species available to those willing to cast a line. Channel catfish and walleye are a

couple of the most popular sport fish that cruise both of the rivers, but you can also catch freshwater drum, bullhead, carp, northern pike, goldeye or even a lake sturgeon. Not only are you able to catch a number of different kinds of fish right inside Winnipeg, but there's always a chance at a catch of a life time!

Fish Winnipeg is hosting their annual fundraising event in the heart of downtown Winnipeg on June 17 at The Forks. This Corporate Challenge allows people in the business community to spend an afternoon fishing with a professional fishing guide, taking part in a catch and release tournament on the Red and Assiniboine Rivers.

While the prizes for the winning team are bragging rights and winner's jackets, "It is quite surprising the competitiveness for what some might see as relatively modest stakes. The corporates like the idea of helping disadvantaged children and giving them an activ-



**Kids enjoying a day learning to fish, with Fish Winnipeg.**

ity that is available, rich or poor, and that a poor kid can be just as good at as a rich one," says Toone.

For more information on Fish Winnipeg

and their angling programs for youth, or to find out how you can help make a difference, see [www.fishwinnipeg.ca](http://www.fishwinnipeg.ca).