

THE MONROE NEWS

NEWS

'Hooked on fishing, not drugs': Fishing Club resuming for Monroe students

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The Fishing Club is back.

During the 2019-2020 school year, Monroe Boat Club Association, Monroe Public Schools and the Monroe County Intermediate School District started the club for area students in fifth and sixth grades.

COVID canceled it after just six months.

But the Fishing Club is resuming Jan. 24. Up to 20 students can join. All equipment is provided.

A parent meeting will take place at 5:30 p.m. Monday at the Monroe Boat Club, 7932 N. Harbor Dr.

In the winter, the Fishing Club will meet for two hours after school the second and fourth Mondays of each month at either the Monroe Boat Club or the Knabusch Math & Science Center, both in Bolles Harbor. In the

spring, students will fish on LaPlaisance Creek from the shoreline of the boat club, at Hoffman Park or from a boat.

Fishing Club is STEM-based and has the theme “Hooked on Fishing, Not on Drugs.”

“Students in the Fishing Club will learn much more than simply casting a line into the water,” Dave Ryan, president of the MBC Association, said. “Our curriculum is STEM-based and uses fishing as a platform for learning math, science, social studies and more. There will be exposure to a wide range of topics, including biology and fish anatomy, identifying various types of fish, habitats, invasive species, regulations, knot tying, water safety, life skills and making positive choices.”

Dr. Charlotte Neuhauser from the MBC Association came up with the idea for the Fishing Club with Nicole Shaughnessy of the Knabusch Math and Science Center.

The two ran the pilot club before the pandemic started. This year, Jamie O’Brien became the new instructor/coach. Four other coaches also will be involved.

“They use their skills and love of the Great Lakes to teach while the kids are having a good time,” Ryan said. “The overall goal of the program is to introduce students to one of the area’s greatest assets, Lake Erie, in a manner that they can enjoy for a lifetime. It is also a stepping stone for the students to the Middle School Fishing Club and eventually the High School Fishing Team.”

Fishing Club members also can compete for prizes and scholarships.

“Area colleges, including Michigan State University and Adrian College, have competitive fishing teams and provide scholarships to students,” Ryan said.

On May 12, club members and the public can meet and hear from professional fishers in a “Meet the Pros” night at the boat club. Monroe Boat Club is hosting the Michigan Walleye Tour May 13-14. More than 100 professional fishers will compete for a total of \$50,000 in prize money and a \$10,000 first-place prize. The public is welcome to attend the afternoon championship weigh-in and awards ceremony. Admission is free.

In 2016, Monroe Boat Club founded a 501c3 organization called the MBC Association. This charitable non-profit has a mission to provide environmental and clean water educational opportunities to youth and adults in the Monroe County area. The Fishing Club is one of the projects.

Through the MBC Association, the Monroe Boat Club also partners with public schools to hold events such as the annual Environmental Career Days, which exposes seventh-graders to the environmental and marine sectors, and an enhanced Maritime Career Day for high school students. This year’s Environmental Career Days is May 24-25.

To learn more about the Fishing Club, email mbcassociationfishingclub@gmail.com.

Other fishing clubs

At least two area schools offer fishing clubs/teams, including Monroe High School.

“We currently have over 60 members,” Michael Foley, ninth-grade principal and club adviser at MHS, said. “The club is open to all MHS students. We have allowed several students from Ida High School to join our club.”

Members learn the basics of fishing and fishing strategies and meet weekly for “Tackle Box Tuesday” meetings.

“During the meetings, students bring various equipment from their tackle box and share out,” Foley said.

Fishing competitions also are held.

Foley started the club in 2018.

“The reason we started was to bring kids together,” Foley said. “Our numbers are steadily rising.”

A Fishing Club also exists at Monroe Middle School.

MMS teacher Kelly Smith started the club in the fall of 2019 with about 15 members.

After a year and a half hiatus because of COVID, the Fishing Club resumed this year.

“I am proud to say that we currently have 24 members in the MMS Fishing Club. This is the most we have ever had,” Smith said.

Open to students at MMS and Monroe Virtual Academy, the club meets monthly in a classroom to practice fishing techniques.

“We also go out into the gym or onto the school grounds to practice casting and reeling techniques as well,” Smith said. “This last, we practiced untangling lines as well. This was a necessary skill! Weather permitting, we try to meet and go fishing once a month. We have been fishing at the Knabusch Math and Science Center two times already this year, in October and November.”

Smith is planning to soon teach another type of fishing.

“I am hoping to take the kids ice fishing out at the Knabusch Center pond, once we have safe ice and we are back in our regular learning format,” Smith said.

“Our Middle School Fishing Club is a huge source of joy for me,” she added. “I love fishing and teaching; combining the two is a dream come true. I’m hoping that with time our little club will continue to grow and that my love of the outdoors will help inspire kids to feel the same way that I do about angling in this great state of ours.”