

## Kids’ fishing day at Chipeta



### Outdoors

By Joel L. Evans

Kids. Calling all kids! You’re busy with school and sports and activities. There is so much to do. Yet, I’m betting that more than a few of you will make plans to come out to Chipeta Lake this Saturday, May 15, for the Rotary Kids Fishing Day.

This annual event sponsored by the Montrose Rotary Club brings out the families for a day of free fishing at Chipeta Lake, south of town near the Ute Indian Museum. The lake will be stocked with catchable size trout.

Chipeta Lake, now one larger lake, used to be Chipeta Lakes, consisting of three separate ponds. Decades ago, a high-water year brought so much water down the adjacent Uncompahgre River that it washed out the dike that borders the lake and the river. With the dike gone, the lakes drained to the river.

A community effort, led by the Gunnison Gorge Anglers chapter of Trout Unlimited, raised money and in-kind donations of heavy equipment to rebuild the exterior river dike and remove the interior dikes that separated the area into the three ponds, making it one larger lake. Grant money from the Colorado Parks and Wildlife completed the project.

Chipeta Lake was for decades a state wildlife area owned by the Colorado Parks and Wildlife. A few years ago, the City of Montrose took



Come on down to Chipeta Lake tomorrow, Saturday, for the annual Rotary Kids Fishing Derby. The lake gets stocked with trout by the Colorado Parks and Wildlife. These kids and parents enjoyed a day of fishing in a previous year. (Joel Evans/Special to the Montrose Daily Press)

ownership of the property as a city park in an exchange with CPW, which took ownership of the previously city-owned property at Cerro Summit, including the reservoir at the top of the hill. The Cerro reservoir has historically been closed to the public but is now public.

Members of Rotary, Colorado Parks and Wildlife and the Gunnison Gorge Anglers will be on hand at Saturday’s fishing derby to provide youth with instruction for those who may need some assistance with casting, hooking, and landing a fish.

Colorado Parks and Wildlife provides kid’s spinning rod and reel outfits. Kids get to keep their fishing setup. These are available free while supplies last. Setups include bait and floats

and hooks and other assorted tackle. This annual event can get a little crowded. After all, who could turn down a day of free fishing on a freshly stocked lake with all equipment provided?

In addition to the catchable trout, the CPW usually sprinkles in a few large trout. And by large, I’m talking a fish that will be measured in pounds rather than inches. In years past, when someone latches onto one of these “pounders”, all attention moves to the kid trying to land the big one. Some fish get away, but a few get landed after much splashing and whooping and generally wild confusion. Although this is not a contest with prizes, just landing one of those big ones is prize enough.

Rotary members share in the

fun, helping the kids who may have never fished before, knowing that they’ve helped them get outside, learn about the outdoors, and have an experience they might not otherwise have the chance.

The free fishing day is open to youths age 15 and under. Anyone 16 and older needs to possess a Colorado fishing license. That includes parents if they intend to fish. The day will start at 9 a.m. To get things started, kids form a line to receive their rod and reel setup, get a small cup with worms, then head out to find a spot along the lakeshore.

Volunteers will walk along the lake, assisting with casting, baiting the hook, or whatever else may be needed such as

undoing the dreaded tangled line. Kids are also schooled in fish habitat, taking care of our environment, fishing ethics, and fishing regulations.

Judging from past response to this event, if the weather is good, expect a large turnout. For parents, sometimes the parking around the lake can be challenging, so expect to walk a short distance with the kids in tow. Whether you come in the morning or in the afternoon makes no difference, but what does make a lifelong difference is the experience for the kids. Bring ‘em out and have some fun!

*Joel L. Evans is an avid fisherman, outdoor writer and photographer, who has explored Western Colorado for decades.*

## Get your kid outdoors

If every one of you would search your memory banks, you will probably find there was someone who mentored you in the outdoors. Perhaps a parent, grandparent or an aunt or uncle, who introduced you to the outdoor world.

In my case, grandparents who really had no interest in going camping, fishing, hunting or backpacking, raised me. They had reached their quota of outdoor excitement long before I landed on their doorstep.

My father did not hunt, hike or camp, but he did have a strong love of fishing. Dad travelled the world over, chasing fish on three continents. He took me along as often as he could, and for that I am forever grateful. Dad took me fishing many times in Canada and taught me to love the Northwoods and the waters.

Taking to the outdoors with your kids outdoors, to share your passion, will teach them the value of the outdoor experience and give them a basis for their own outdoor life as they grow. Youth today spend more time indoors than any other generation and it is up to us to get them outside.

Getting the kids involved should start with the planning process for the adventure at home. Give children the responsibility to pack their own gear and clothes for your trip (after you help make the list with them). Give each child their own duffel bag for their gear and teach them that bag is



### Tips from the Posse

By Mark Rackay

their responsibility, and to always return gear to that bag when finished. These basics apply for a day trip as much as an overnigher.

First thought about bringing the kids is their safety. They will be in a totally new environment, with things and places they have never seen before. If you take to the mountains, remember that the mountain is not very forgiving for mistakes, and less forgiving for lost children.

Set some ground rules for the kids. Tell them the boundaries, where they can roam and areas they should stay away from. Depending on age, are they allowed to go by the river? Be aware of dense woods and cliffs or dangerous areas where little ones should not venture off to without you along.

Remember that kids travel on their stomach, and I suppose, I still do (just ask my wife). If your trip will involve some cooking, plan the meals to be fun and include some roasting food to be done with sticks over the fire. Kids love s’mores but they can be lethal to adults. Best leave the chocolate marshmallow sugar bombs to the younger members of the crew.

Allow the kids to help contribute to the menu planning at home to help get them excited about the trip. Pack foods you know the kids like rather than experiment with new foods. Kids love snacks, and with the fresh air outdoors, best bring plenty.

The worst words a parent wants to hear would be when a kid announces, “I’m bored.” Be ready with some potential activities and ideas to counter the boredom. Remember, the day is about them, not you, so don’t be disappointed when their attention span is short in an activity you love.

It’s OK to bring a favorite toy along, but keep toys from home to a minimum. Leave room for lots of unstructured outdoor play. Children will find ways to create their own outdoor amusement, and isn’t that what we are there for?

If you do bring toys for the kids, try and find something that will complement their outdoor activity such as a Frisbee, ball or some inexpensive binoculars to watch birds and game with. If you are taking them fishing, consider setting them up with their own rod, reel and tackle box.

Be aware of how much sun exposure the kids get during the daytime. The hours that the Colorado sun is the strongest is between 11 a.m. and 3 p.m. Try and limit their exposure during those hours. I grew up before all the worries of skin cancer and am paying the price now.

Lather them kids up with sunscreen, and ap-



Tyler Rackay is learning about the outdoors by spending time with his dad and cantankerous old grandfather, Mark Rackay. (Photo by Mark Rackay)

ply it liberally and often. Pay special attention to the face, nose and ears. If the gang is swimming, or taking part in an activity that involves heavy perspiration, you will have to reapply sunscreen more often.

Remember that your child’s normal fluid intake will be significantly up because of the altitude, heat, and amount of exercise. Kids should drink plenty of water before, during, and after their activity.

It is never too soon to start teaching your kids the basics of survival

and first aid. Being in the woods with you is a perfect time for them to start learning the skills that will last a lifetime of an outdoor lifestyle. I still use some of the skills my mentors taught me over 50 years ago.

My grandparents pawned me off on an old man friend of the family. He introduced me to the wilds and how to hunt, camp, and survive in the woods. Between that, and learning to fish with my dad, I learned enough to get by in just about anything the mountain

throws at me. Give your kids the same chance for a wonderful life outdoors.

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