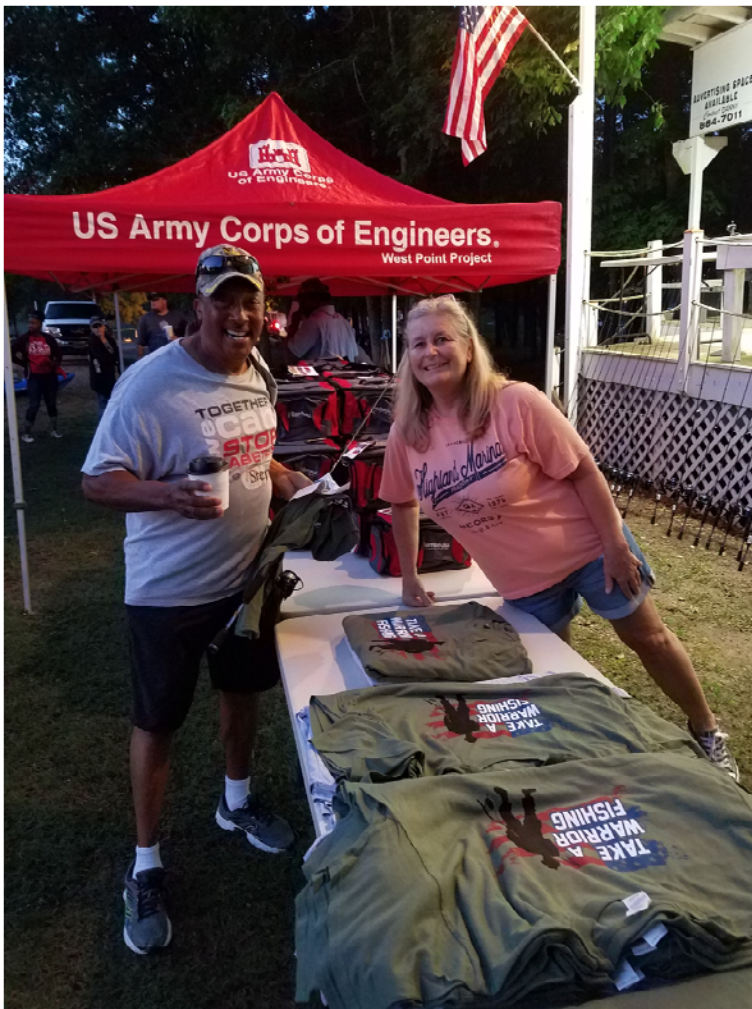


Take A Warrior Fishing Event

**By C.A.S.T for Kids Foundation at West Point Lake
with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers**

Since 2012, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers at the West Point Project has worked with the C.A.S.T for Kids Foundation and recently organized the 6th Annual Take A Warrior Fishing Event that was held on Saturday, 2 June 2018 at Highland Marina Resort. The focus of this event is to provide a social activity for current military personnel and veterans. Volunteers, who have a fishing vessel and are familiar with West Point Lake, come out to this event and are paired up with a warrior for the day to enjoy a couple hours of fishing on the lake followed by fun non-competitive weigh-ins, lunch and awards. Usually, warriors for this event comprise of veterans who have never been fishing or never been on a boat to fish. Although many of the volunteer boat captains have supported the event year after year, new warriors are selected every year, ensuring the event provides this unique experience to as many people as possible.





Activities begin early in the morning. Volunteers are on-site as early as 5:00am launching and inspecting their boating vessels for safety. Tables are arranged so that pre-registered participants get checked in and provided the necessary gear and supplies before getting paired with a partner and heading out to go fishing. Everyone is usually on the water by 6:30—7:00am EST, just in time to catch those early morning fish!

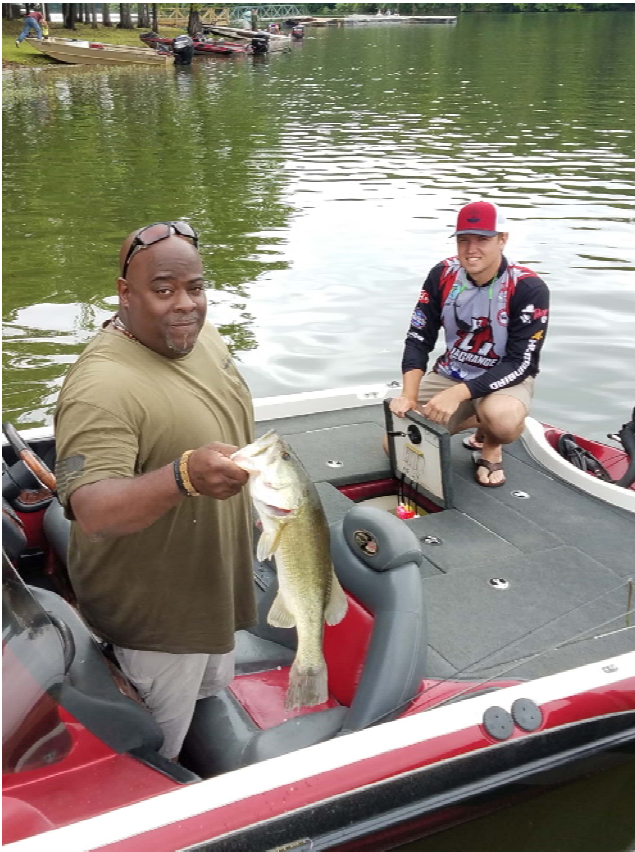
Kris Svec (on right), owner of Highland Marina Resort, assists in the morning at the warrior check-in area to ensure warriors receive tackle boxes, fishing poles and t-shirts.

A separate check-in area for boat captains provides them maps of the lake, safety check-sheets, extra tackle, hats, and life jackets.

In preparation for this event, C.A.S.T for kids fronts \$5,000 to provide tackle, equipment, t-shirts, and hats for up to 50 warriors and volunteer boat captains. Jeff Barnes, the local regional coordinator for C.A.S.T sponsored events, is seen with Park Ranger and local event coordinator Rebecca Downey. In order to make this event successful, Rebecca begins planning and organizing team meetings as early as February and continues to monitor progress and deadlines until the main event on the first Saturday in June. "This event date coincides with the states legal free fishing day, where you aren't required to have a fishing license to enjoy these activities." - Rebecca.

In addition to keeping up with event details, Rebecca also encourages members of her planning team to reach out to the local community to find sponsors who will donate back to the C.A.S.T for Kids Foundation and make up the funding difference. An assignment that the USACE is not able to take part in directly as an agency.





Rainy weather did not stop 35 warriors and 41 boat captains from coming out and fishing. Although many pre-registered warriors could not make it, many from out of state from as far as South Carolina, Tennessee and Mississippi came to West Point Lake on the Georgia/Alabama state line.

West Point Lake provides anglers a variety of water depths, vegetation base and rocky bottoms resulting in multiple species of fishing to be caught including largemouth bass, rock bass, smallmouth bass, spotted bass, striper, crappie, bluegill, catfish and more.



Many of the volunteer boat captains frequent West Point Lake and participate in local fishing tournament outs of Highland Marina Resort. These experienced anglers provided their warrior partner an exciting fishing trip.



Although this was not a competitive fishing tournament, this event did however provide the feel of a tournament to the warriors by having weigh-ins for largest bass, largest striper, largest crappie, most fish, and smallest fish.

A professional tournament announcer creates an exciting atmosphere on the tournament stage as warriors and captains showed off their catches.

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Highland Marina Resort has been the main staging location for this event since it's beginning at West Point Lake. The location is ideal in the fact that facilities are provided, boat ramps are large and accessible and they are located off the main body of the lake.

The owners of Highland Marina Resort work as part of the event team with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and has consistently worked to provide funding resources, staging locations, food and reaches out to potential boat captains who frequent the marina. Every year, they also ensure that one or two pontoon boats are available with drivers and extra volunteers for any warrior who has a severe disability or handicap. No warrior has ever been turned down due to their physical condition.

Free lunch is provided to all participants with the main event concluding at 2:00pm EST.

During this time, music and social sessions allow anglers and warriors to share their stories and make lasting friendships. Many of which stay in contact and meet up later in the year for more fishing adventures. It's a great event with a wonderful purpose. . . To provide our military with a unique fishing opportunity at West Point Lake.

