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Jaycees & Anglers Gear Up For Extravaganza

With Hole in the Day Bay of Gull Lake iced over earlier than years past, the Jaycees are excited about this year's Ice Fishing Extravaganza. The 14th Annual event is scheduled for Saturday, January 17th, 2004.

According to volunteer chairperson Brian Lindberg, "People usually procrastinate with buying their tickets because of ice concerns. We haven't had any of the typical "*will there be ice*" questions this year. Response from our mailing to past participants and our early marketing efforts has been great. Also, our web site is getting a lot more hits this year. It seems Extravaganza tickets are on a lot of Christmas wish lists."

Although last year's Extravaganza didn't set an event record for attendance, it was the largest year for donations to local charities. Lindberg says this is a motivating factor for the hundreds of volunteers involved. Donations from last January's event totaled \$206,000 with close to \$145,000 going to Confidence Learning Center, the Jaycees primary charity.

"Our big prize sponsors are all on board, our marketing is in place and now we're working on logistics and the fun stuff," says Lindberg. "We really want this year to be a big year for local tourism as well as the charities who count on the funds"

The Jaycees spend nearly \$75,000 with marketing efforts each year. Statewide marketing includes direct mail, television, radio, print advertising and sport show displays. National marketing this year involves In Fisherman publications and MidWest Outdoor Television.

With more than \$150,000 in cash and prizes up for grabs, it's easy to understand why so many people would want to participate in the Extravaganza. The Jaycees are hoping to see more than 12,000 anglers on the ice this year.

"The Extravaganza has really become a tradition for a lot of people. And not just from Minnesota, they come from all around the country as well as foreign countries. For some it's the chance to experience something unique and for others, it's a chance to win a big prize. The bottom line is that it's just plain old fun," says Lindberg.

The event has also become a tradition for at least one major media focus each year. National Geographic, In Fisherman Television, Babe Winkleman's *Good Fishing*, Smithsonian Magazine and others have featured past Extravaganza's. Last year the Jaycees hosted syndicated

Sporting News Radio's *Murry in the Morning* show as well as a New York based photographer whose aerial photo was included in a two page spread of Sport's Illustrated.

So what's on the agenda for this year? Lindberg says it's two early to let the cat out of the bag. "We're working with some fun ideas and contacts. Rest assured something or someone unique will be involved."

Logistics the Jaycees are working to improve include on ice security, weigh in, traffic and side events.

The Team Competition, which is open to area businesses, as a way to support the Jaycee's efforts has grown over the past couple of years and the committee

is working to make this a more prominent piece of the event. For a sponsorship fee, a team can be entered to combine their catch and officially claim bragging rights as community Extravaganza champions. Individuals also qualify for any of the contest prizes.

The On Ice Olympics hosted by ice fishing professionals from On Ice Tour will again be on hand to involve youth with the Extravaganza. The fifty yard dash, as it has become known, involves several ice fishing related obstacles such as reading a Vexilar, simulated hole drilling, reeling in a tip up and more. Participants are timed in age groups with the champions sharing over \$5,000 in prizes.

The familiar pink banners again designate volunteer retailers in the Brainerd Lakes Area as information and ticket outlets. Tickets and information are also available on line at www.icefishing.org or by calling the Jaycees at

1-800-950-9461.