

Press Release – January 25th, 2005

For further information regarding this release or the 15th Annual Brainerd Jaycees \$150,000 Ice Fishing Extravaganza, please contact Bob Slaybaugh, Brainerd Jaycees at (218) 828-2344.

Thousands of Anglers Gather On Gull Lake

(Brainerd, MN) - Ice fishermen who gambled on the weather or were able to make it to Brainerd's Gull Lake this past Saturday (Jan. 22) were treated to a beautiful winter day for the 15th Annual Brainerd Jaycees \$150,000 Ice Fishing Extravaganza.

Temps were in the high teens at the noon start of the tournament when more than 9,000 anglers dropped their lines for the chance to win close to \$200,000 in cash and prizes.

According to volunteer chairperson Shawn Ridler, "The snowstorm made a mess the night before, but we still had a great turnout and it went off without much of a hitch."

A quick estimate based on pre event ticket sales indicates 2,500 to 3,000 anglers chose not to attend due to road conditions and worries about the weather.

For Sara Kitzman of St. Cloud MN the drive to Brainerd was well worth it. Her 3.71 pound walleye was the largest fish of the day and earned her a new Ford truck. Kitzman is only the second woman to claim first place in an Extravaganza and at 24 years old became the youngest champion.

Kitzman's winning catch came from 64 feet of water and bit on a red hook tipped with a rosie red minnow.

While the majority of the fish registered throughout the day were perch, good numbers of walleyes, tullibee and rock bass were also brought to the scales. Of the top 150 fish registered, walleyes accounted for 72 place winners.

Jason Himmelwright didn't mind that his walleye only weighed a half pound. That put him in 100th place, which claimed him \$10,000 cash. One look at Jason celebrating with his friends on stage at the end of the tournament made everyone wonder how much cash would actually make it home.

More than 500 volunteers serving a variety of roles were on the ice to stage what is always a monumental task. Ticket sales, security, safety, and hole drilling are always a top priority for organizers. An estimated 24,000 holes were predrilled through 22 inches of ice on the afternoon prior. This was the task of 140 volunteers with 60 power augers provided by D-Rock Inc. and Strikemaster Corporation.

And the work does not stop at the end of the tournament. What took volunteers three days to set up was taken down and removed from the ice immediately following the prize distributions and mass exodus of anglers. The small city of tents, heaters, generators, speakers, concession stands and various signage was off the ice within four hours of the contest's ending at 3:00pm.

Local boy scouts finished the clean up the next morning with a final walk and garbage pick up on and off the lake.

It will take the Jaycees a couple of weeks to evaluate the financial success of the event and organizers look forward to again having an impact on local charities. Confidence Learning Center, an outdoor education facility for persons with developmental disabilities, will receive 70 percent of the proceeds with the remaining funds being distributed to a variety of non-profit organizations.

While organizers expect charitable funds to be less than the \$250,000 raised last year, they are still happy with the results of their efforts and are looking forward to next year's event, which is tentatively scheduled for January 21, 2006.

A complete listing of winners and photo's of the 15th Annual Brainerd Jaycees \$150,000 Ice Fishing Extravaganza is available at www.icefishing.org