

COMMENTARY

Another fishing yarn

The vision of one of our fellow citizens reminded me that we all are bobbing about in this grand ark called earth. Sometimes, the best part of the voyage is when you pull your oar a tad harder than others, scoot over to give a little more room and steady the boarding of those not as sure-footed as you. Furthermore, admiring another's paddle or complaining about the rough waters only insures infectious sea sickness.



Kevin Ryan

Those who have been smacked by an oar and those who have nearly drowned under the weighty an-

chor of lost hope or entangled by the never and forever line, may be the most inspirational crew in the craft of life and potentially the most enduring teachers.

Certain serenity waits if we seize moments to wade in when others wallow, extend a helping hand and welcome aboard those for who even the shallowest of waters seem too deep.

Mike Johns - Captain Mike as he is rightly known - a local businessman following in the compassionate footsteps of his dad, Larry Johns, is doing just that.

Capt. Mike, one of three sons, knows quite a bit about steadying the vessel as others close to him sail rough seas. He also knows the reassuring quietude of connecting with the nature that surrounds us as well as the nature of less than fortunate children. So Capt. Mike set his sails and sights on a dream and this Sunday Lake Solano welcomes 20 such young ones and that dream to its shores.

After a few modest mentions to regular patrons and an in-store flier, a network built on years of Capt. Mike and his dad, a district level Kiwanis International lieutenant governor, investing in helping others spread the news quickly. Donations grew faster than the proverbial one-armed fisherman's story of the whale that got away.

The Lake Solano Park ranger was soon on board. Then some Fairfield teachers and counselors, in cooperation with the local YMCA and the Sunisun Kiwanis, gathered up young folks who have had a tough time of putting both their poles and their feet in the water.

This Sunday, transported by the YMCA, some novice anglers will be getting great new gear and gifts provided by Longs, Ace Hardware, California Inland Fisheries Foundation and Wal-Mart, and perhaps tips on how to tackle life.

Capt. Mike, scratching his head through an ever-present fishing cap, said in so many words, "For a lot of folks the solution to Solano County is 'let's just leave.' I say, let's change. Let's work with kids and parents, anybody can love a child. It doesn't take tax dollars, just a heart. There is something about being in nature that makes it hard to stay indoors and be as interested in bad stuff. Fishing helps kids open up; they nibble in their own time. Then the connection occurs and nothing feels better."

Capt. Mike, and a growing team of supporters, are going to try to make this become an annual event whose focus will be under-privileged and especially physically and mentally challenged kids. Call him at 425-9792. Besides, if you only hint, Capt. Mike can spin a fishing yarn even seasoned politicians would admire.

Certainly, Capt. Mike is not alone in good deeds. He is emblematic of the many who extend their hearts and hands to those less-fortunate. There are and must be many oars in these waters of life. Perhaps, a little more time passing out both fishing poles and better ways to tackle life benefits us all.

Kevin Ryan is a retired colonel.