

# Kids Day of Fishing began with \$20 donation

AMY MAGINNIS-HONEY  
DAILY REPUBLIC

FAIRFIELD — The early birds are the ones to get the worms and this Saturday as more than 200 children are expected to be outside Fairfield's Civic Center pond at 7 a.m. with rods and reels in hand to take part in the Robert Orlando Kids Fishing Derby.

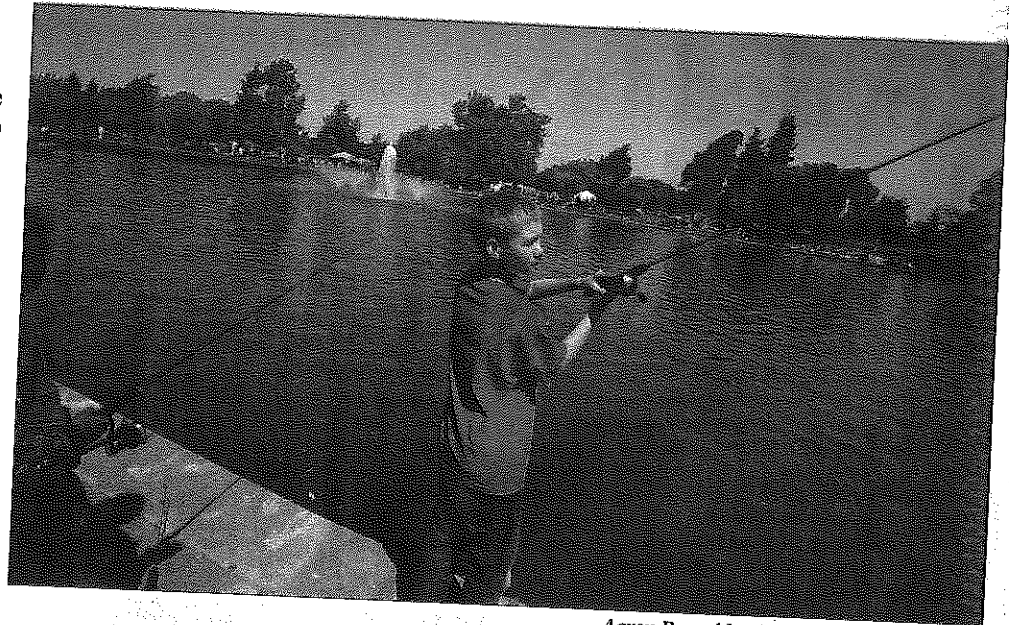
This annual free event, sponsored and organized by the Fairfield-based Kids Day of Fishing Inc., coincides at 9 a.m. with the city of Fairfield's Earth Day Celebration.

Michael Johns began Kids Day of Fishing Inc. 10 years ago with his father, the late Larry Johns.

"I've had a couple of events where I've helped hundreds of kids catch their first fish in one day," Michael Johns said in a press release for the event. "That's like being a kid in the candy store for me.

"To see those kids standing there, running up and down the side of the pond screaming and holding the fish up and I'm the one that helped them catch it, it's a joy. That's why we put all of this on. Their joy is our reward."

A \$20 donation a decade ago motivated Michael Johns, an avid fisherman



Children fish during the Kids Day of Fishing event at the Fairfield Civic Center pond in 2013. *Aaron Rosenblatt/Daily Republic file (2013)*

and owner of the Fairfield business, Mail Mart Plus, to begin his organization. It has since grown to include five annual events on an approximately \$20,000 budget. While there are some larger sponsors, most of the funds come from smaller donations and community organizations.

Larry and Michael Johns chartered Kids Day of Fishing in October 2007. Larry Johns died in May 2008 and Michael Johns and an executive board continue to lead the nonprofit today. Their first event, at Lake Solano, included 100 children, all

with special needs.

Michael Johns is the youngest of three sons. His oldest brother, Lee Johns, was born with cerebral palsy. He grew up to become a systems integrator with Sprint, in a management position.

"He refused to see himself as disabled," Michael Johns said. "He has so much inner strength. He was a kid they said would never be able to walk or ride a bicycle and he did it all. That's how he's lived his whole life."

The fishing event is for children ages of 3 to 15 and special needs children of all ages.

Registration is on a first-come basis for the first 250 participants. Pre-registration is only available for children with special needs. All other participants must register the morning of the derby.

Children will receive derby shirts, rods and reels, tackle kits and bait to fish in the pond. They can also bring their own gear from home.

Trophies will be awarded for top fish with a five-fish limit per angler.

For more information on Kids Day of Fishing, and to pre-register a child with special needs, visit [www.kidsdayoffishing.org](http://www.kidsdayoffishing.org).

Today in

discovery of 60 volumes of personal diaries purportedly

Five years ago: The Deepwater Horizon oil spill

Singer Glen Campbell is 79. Actor