

Fish camp makes anglers out of youth

By Christopher Kelley

LAMONT — Under sunny skies and on a lake surrounded by trees, the young campers at the Beau Turner Youth Conservation Center's Fish Camp are learning the ways of the angler.

The weeklong camp just south of Monticello, for kids 9 to 15 years old, teaches all the finer points of the sport: tackle and bait information, fish biology, boat safety and how to clean and fillet fish. Campers are given tackle boxes, a rod and a reel, all of which are theirs to keep.

"They're on the water 50 to 60 percent of the time they're here," said Rae Waddell, director of the Joe Budd Aquatic Education Center, where the program initially began. "It's an immersion — we want to make them self-sufficient."

BTYCC was opened in 2008 by Beau Turner, vice president of Turner Enterprises. The fish camp was expanded to the center last year. The center also hosts a hunting camp and is open to the public on weekends.

Kenneth Barker, director of the center, understands Turner's devotion to the outdoors.

"Beau really wants to reach out to all kids and do whatever he can to offer any kind of opportunity to kids to get them outside," Barker said. "It doesn't matter if it's fishing, going on a picnic or hunting."

The fish camp is funded almost entirely by donations. When anglers purchase their licenses many retailers ask for a \$5 donation to the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, every penny of which goes toward youth camps across the state.

"I think it's a good camp," said Jacari Harris, 14, one of the program's campers. "I recommend people come here."



