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Blind people go on annual fishing trip

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Greg Steinbacher, of Williamsport, fondly remembers fishing as a child with his grandfather, a memory that many growing up in Central Pennsylvania share.

But for Steinbacher, it is unique because he is blind. He always has been.

"When I was about 10 or 11, I used to go trout fishing with my grandpap. Fishing today reminds me of him. It would only take him a minute to catch a trout," Steinbacher recalled as he waited patiently for a nibble on his line. "I miss my pap. He is dead now."

Steinbacher was one of 13 visually impaired or blind people who were treated to a day of fishing Friday as North Central Sight Services held its third annual fishing derby for blind and visually challenged people from Lycoming, Centre, Clinton and Tioga counties.

Assisted by others who are able to see, it gave Steinbacher a chance at what others take for granted: The simple pleasure of sitting by a stream, baiting a hook and waiting for the chance to reel in a big one.

Ken Bower, who is also blind, likes to be in the outdoors as much as possible. He also remembered fishing as a child.

"I remember fishing with my father when I was little. We'd go trout fishing - good memories. I'm from Lock Haven and we would go fishing along the bank," Bower said. "Today reminds me of that."

Participants in the derby received a fishing license waiver from the state to fish at the pond for the day, according to Keevin Larson, president of K.C. Larson Inc. and one of the event sponsors.

Larson also donated use of his Montoursville pond, Larson Pond, which is registered with the state.

It is the first time the fishing derby was at the pond, and many were happy to be there.

The fishing derby began three years ago when Heather Engle, director of program services for North Central Sight Services, was a caseworker.

As such, she got to know clients who had lost their vision later in life. They were avid fishers and hunters at one time and would reminisce about fishing and the outdoor activities they enjoyed when they had full vision.

"These men were avid fishermen and hunters and gave up because they were frustrated and couldn't do it anymore," Engle said. "People who lose sight later in life become frustrated because they can no longer do the things they once enjoyed."



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Ken Bower, left, an employee with North Central Sight Services dodges a suggestion by fellow employee Gina Miller, right that he kiss the fish he just caught at an N.C.S.S. fishing derby held at Larson Pond in Montoursville Friday morning.



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Bill Piotrowski of Loyalsock Township, a friend of sponsor and property owner Keevin Larson, filets fish caught Monday morning during the Third Annual North Central Sight Services Fishing Derby held at Larson's Pond in Montoursville.