

# OUTDOORS

## Take someone fishing

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The most commonly asked question of a fisherman when he returns to the dock is a no-brainer: Did you do any good?

It's too easy to assume the point of fishing is catching dinner. But those who go know it's about so much more. Heck, as a lifelong angler and an outdoors writer, you'd think I'd know better than to ask a guy like Warren York if his buddies caught anything good on their recent outing.

He chuckled. "It really isn't important," he said.

The North Fort Myers veteran of the U.S. Marine Corps and the U.S. Air Force gets it. "I know that sounds silly, but it's about camaraderie."

He and 43 Lee County veterans - from wars spanning Iraq to World War II - recently were treated to a day of fishing by 16 professional guides.

York ended up letting someone else go in his place, but he saw his friends off at the dock at Punta Rassa. And when they came back, he heard their fish tales. Boy, they caught fish. Snook, trout, shark, mackerel, redfish and more. No one was skunked. "Everyone caught a lot of fish," said Capt. Steve Waugh, a Fort Myers native and co-founder of the Lee County Professional

Guides Association, which donated the day to host the vets.

You go with a guide, you usually catch fish. Plus Southwest Florida's fishing grounds have repeatedly been written up as being among the best for backbay angling nationwide.

But there I go again - missing the point. It's about fishing, not catching.

"You know veterans; we all like to be together," York said.

He and co-chair Kathy Purtyan a while back created Veterans Helping Hands, a North Fort Myers-based group that finds opportunities for disabled and able-bodied vets.

Also a while back, Waugh and his co-founder of the guides association, Skip Dunn, figured they wanted to do something for vets. Waugh himself isn't one, though his father, Charley, served in Korea. "But I've taken some disabled vets before as customers and they enjoyed it," Waugh said.

"These guys gave up a lot and this makes them feel good," he said. "They end up thanking us, and we should be thanking them."

It's been about 12 years now that the guides and York's group have been doing this once-a-year fall outing. They don't publicize it. They just do it.

The outing is followed up by a lunch. This year, the owners of Jensen's Twin Palms Marina on Captiva donated shrimp and the American Legion on Sanibel cooked and hosted the vets.



COURTESY PHOTO

Fishing is good for the soul.

It was a good time.

It's something to think about: You can recreate such a fishing day with someone you know who is maybe down on his luck or needs a bit of time on the water with a companion.

I bet if you're reading this, you're either an angler or you're among the nation's estimated 34.5 million lapsed or occasional anglers.

Someone took you fishing when you were a kid. Or you used to fish with your buddies before you got busy with other things.

Revisit it now. Then take someone else along.

### TAKE SOMEONE FISHING

>>Studies show the nation has 34.5 million lapsed and/or occasional anglers. Don't be one of them.

>>Start fishing again now. With weather cooling and the sun's strength lessening a bit, fall is a great time to go.

>>Check out regulations, bag limits and species information at [www.MyFWC.com](http://www.MyFWC.com)

>>Refresh your memory on fishing basics - knot tying, bait and more - at [www.takemefishing.org](http://www.takemefishing.org)



Recreational boating and fishing are America's favorite sporting activities, with more than 50 million people participating every year—more than golf and tennis combined.

Why? Because it's fun. Because it feels good to be out on the water. But mostly because fishing and boating are things you can do with someone.

Take someone fishing this fall. Stranger or friend, it doesn't matter. And it also won't matter if you don't catch anything. Sure someone back at the dock will ask, "Did you do any good?" And you can answer yes, regardless of whether the cooler is empty or full.

Fishing is good for the soul. York knows it. "It's just a great day for them," he said. ■

— Betsy Clayton is a freelancer based on Pine Island and also is Lee County Parks & Recreation's waterways coordinator. Contact her at [boatingbybetsy@yahoo.com](mailto:boatingbybetsy@yahoo.com).

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