

news release

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Foundation's 'Big Bass Bash' will benefit NICU at Regency Center for Women and Infants

WINTER HAVEN, FL – (February 1, 2011) – The Big Bass Bash is back. Anglers from throughout Florida will be off in search of lunker bass and thousands of dollars in prize money during the Winter Haven Hospital Foundation's third annual Big Bass Bash on Feb. 26. In the process, they will leave behind a major impact on some of Central Florida's tiniest patients.

Proceeds from the Big Bass Bash annually go to support the care of premature and sick babies in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) at Winter Haven Hospital's Regency Center for Women and Infants. Of the roughly 2,000 babies delivered annually at the Regency, about 300 require care in the NICU due to premature birth or other health issues.

Since the inaugural Big Bass Bash in 2009, the event has raised more than \$30,000 for the NICU, thanks to the participation of hundreds of anglers and numerous sponsors who see the importance of helping women and infants.

Presenting sponsors of the 2011 Big Bass Bash include: Pepsi; Budweiser; Smokin' Jim's House of Bar-B-Q; Harry's Old Place; the Ledger Media Group; Bright House Sports Network; Sunnyridge Farms; Lamar Outdoor Advertising; Ron's Bait & Tackle; Ring Power; WPCV 97.5 Country; WWRZ MAX 98.3; Sodexo Health Care and the City of Winter Haven.

Competing anglers will weigh anchor from Lake Shipp on Feb. 26 at safe daylight. The sun is scheduled to rise in Winter Haven at 6:55 a.m. on the 26th.

Participants will be fishing for a share of a total purse valued at \$4,000. Contestants who weigh in with the largest catch (five fish maximum) will take home a \$2,500 first prize. Second place finishers will win \$1,000 and third place, \$500. The 2010 tournament had more than 60 boats and 120 fishermen, and was won by Brian Winton of Orlando and Mike Templeton of Winter Haven with a total catch of 27 pounds, 9 ounces. The biggest bass was caught by Winter Haven resident Gene Mobley and weighed in at 10 pounds, six ounces.

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“The success of the Big Bash Bash has exceeded everyone’s expectations,” said **Alan Gustafson**, Foundation Trustee and event chairman. “We are so thankful for our sponsors and for everyone who participates. We think this is the best time of the year to fish in the bass capital of the world and there’s no better cause than helping babies get a good start in life.”

Tournament anglers will be able to fish throughout the Winter Haven Chain of Lakes, regarded by professional fishing guides as one of the top bass-fishing sites in the world. According to Bass Online.com, “many catches in the 10-pound range and above are taken each year,” from the Winter Haven Chain of Lakes.

“We’re so blessed to live in Central Florida where we have an outstanding natural environment that affords us the opportunity to hold an event like the Big Bass Bash,” said **Joel Thomas**, Vice President, Development Marketing and Public Relations for Winter Haven Hospital. “On behalf of our staff and board of trustees, we would like to thank everyone who has played a part in making this event happen for the women and infants at the Regency, especially our sponsors.”

This year’s event features a special appearance by Bright House Sports Networks *Hooked on Fishing* show host **Glen Pla**. At Bright House, Pla has turned his lifetime love of fishing into programming the whole family can enjoy.

The fishing tournament will be capped off with an awards ceremony, barbecue, seafood and an outdoor country music concert featuring the band Southern Rhythm on the shore of Lake Shipp. The festivities begin at 11:00 a.m. and will run through 2 p.m. Admission is free to the public. Food will be provided by Smokin’ Jims House of Bar-B-Q and Harry’s Old Place. Fresh blueberries will be provided by Sunnyridge Farms.

The weigh-in and awards presentation begins at 1 p.m.

Anglers can pre-register at Ron’s Tackle Box, 380 S. Lake Shore Way in Lake Alfred. For more information, call Ron at (863) 956-4990.

Christina Fitzsimons, director of development, marketing and PR support services for Winter Haven Hospital, said sponsorship opportunities and vendor spots for the Big Bash Bash remain available.

“We want everyone who wants to see the spectacle of giant bass, high-performance boats, great vendors and an outdoor country music concert to come out and enjoy a day on the lake,” Fitzsimons said.

For more information about the event, call the Foundation at 863-292-4138.

About the Winter Haven Hospital Foundation

The Winter Haven Hospital Foundation, Inc. is a not-for-profit charitable institution governed by a board of volunteer trustees who serve without pay. The Foundation cultivates philanthropic

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support to provide patients with state-of-the-art medical care, cutting-edge technology and equipment, top quality education, and the best and brightest personnel. The funds benefit the patients of Winter Haven Hospital, the Regency Center for Women & Infants, and many other health services provided to our growing community.

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