

news release

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Hospital

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Second annual ‘Big Bass Bash’ will benefit NICU at Regency Center for Women and Infants

WINTER HAVEN, FL – (February 8, 2010) – Fishing enthusiasts from throughout Florida will be angling for more than lunker bass and thousands of dollars in prize money during the Winter Haven Hospital Foundation’s second annual Big Bass Bash on Feb. 27. They also will be seeking to have a major impact on some of the region’s tiniest patients.

Proceeds from the Big Bass Bash will 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.

In 2009, the inaugural Big Bass Bash attracted more than 200 anglers and more than 2,000 participants. The event raised more than \$21,000 for the NICU.

Presenting sponsors of the 2010 Big Bass Bash include: Pepsi; Budweiser; Smokin’ Jim’s House of Bar-B-Q; the *News Chief*; the *Ledger*; Bright House Sports Network; Sunnyridge Farms; Ron’s Bait & Tackle; Marine Supply; WPCV, 97.5 Country; WWRZ, MAX 98.3; Sodexo Health Care; Spring Lake Rehabilitation Center; the musical group Band Haven and the City of Winter Haven.

Anglers will weigh anchor from Lake Shipp on Feb. 27 at safe daylight. The sun is scheduled to rise in Winter Haven at 6:53 a.m. on the 27th.

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 2009 tournament was won by Eric Lewis and Dale Jackson with a total catch of 22 pounds, 9.2 ounces. The biggest bass was caught by Winter Haven resident Terry Jones and weighed in at 10 pounds, six ounces.

“Last year’s event was a huge success and we’re happy to be back for a second year,”

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Big Bass Bash scheduled for Feb. 27 (Page 2)

said **Alan Gustafson**, Foundation Trustee and event chairman. "It's a perfect time of year to go fishing in Central Florida, 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 **Lance Anastasio**, president and CEO of Winter Haven Hospital. "On behalf of our staff and board of trustees, I would like to thank everyone who has played a part making this event happen, especially our sponsors."

This year's event features a special appearance by Bright House Networks 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 and an outdoor music concert 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. The featured performance is by Band Haven. Barbecue will be provided by Smokin' Jims House of Bar-B-Q.

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

Anglers can pre-register early 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 concert to come out," Fitzsimons said.

For more information about the event, call the Foundation at 863-291-6732.

About the Winter Haven Hospital Foundation

Winter Haven Hospital Foundation, Inc. is a not-for-profit charitable institution governed by a board of volunteer trustees who serve without pay. In an effort to meet the continuing needs of our health service organization and the growing communities it serves, the Foundation provides philanthropic support for the very latest in medical care, technology, equipment, facilities, manpower, and education for Winter Haven Hospital, the Regency Center for Women and Infants and the many other health services we provide in east Polk and Highlands counties.

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