

# HOOKEED

## ON THE *derby*

BY IVAN WRIGHT

They were all seeking pole position, but the pace was hardly fast. Hundreds of children and adults took their fishing poles to Reservoir Park, stocked with several hundred pounds of bluegill and catfish, for the annual Community Fishing Derby.

Organized by the Fort Wayne Community Fishing Club, the annual event attracts hundreds of youth each year to several days of fishing, food and fun.

However, club members like Ephraim Smiley and Iris Wade want to do more -- a lot more. They're working to have a reflection pool at Reservoir Park restored to a pond that could support aquatic life. So far, the effort is meeting resistance from state and local officials.

"We want them to return this to a pond. It would give the children an opportunity to fish," Smiley explained. "This is our mission. The technology is available to make this happen."

**Three cute kids pose for the camera at the fishing derby.**



For now, the Fishing Club takes children on short fishing trips and organizes the annual fishing derby. Thanks to donations from the public, businesses and organizations, the club stocks the pool with fish and provides kids with a fun, safe and free three days of fishing. St. Mary's Lodge has been an especially dedicated sponsor for the past few years.

"They've really looked out for the kids in this community," Smiley said.

Thanks to sponsor support, the club even provides fishing poles to youngsters who don't own one.

"To be involved, we just ask

### you can help

For the first time, the club plans a second derby this year, possibly in September. The club needs to raise about \$3,000 for fish and supplies. If you'd like to help, send a donation to the Fort Wayne Community Fishing Club, 3511 S. Lafayette, Fort Wayne, IN 46806.

that the children keep their grades up," said Wade.

Club members point out that children who participate learn from the fishing experience.

"They learn about patience," Wade added. "They learn about the environment. That's something we stress."

In the meantime, the club plans to keep up the pressure on city parks managers and officials with the Indiana Department of Natural Resources. "The growing public interest in restoring the pool to a pond and developing a unique urban fishery are encouraging," said Smiley.

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