

Grand Opening and Great Maine Outdoor Weekend

Despite the frigid temperatures and the threat of yet another winter storm, over 150 people came out to celebrate the TREE Experiential Education Center's Grand Opening on Saturday, February 14. This event was in conjunction with the Great Maine Outdoor Weekend, which is held every year to encourage the public to get outside and enjoy all of the recreational opportunities that the winter season has to offer.

The TREE Center is located in Sanford at Waban's lakefront camp on the shores of Bauneg Beg Lake and activities promoted the many opportunities afforded by the lake, camp and hiking trails.

The TREE staff added more activities to this annual event, due to the celebratory atmosphere in the brand new 4-season Experiential Education Center. Visitors could participate in a variety of winter activities such as: ice fishing, skating, snowshoeing, archery, a winter scavenger hunt, nature walk, snowman building, and a snowshoe obstacle course.

There were massive amounts of snow and slush on the ice, which made for some challenging conditions for the informational fishing workshop in which participants learned about ice fishing equipment, tactics, and fish species of Bauneg Beg Lake. TREE volunteer Dan Gile provided an interesting and fun time for many first-timers, and several youngsters had the satisfaction of successful fishing as they hooked chain pickerel and black crappie.

In a larger fishing group, members of International Student Incorporation spent most of their day out on the lake ice fishing, an activity the organization looks forward to every year. The group is comprised of international students from Boston area universities and colleges and come from all over the world, many of which have never experienced the kind of record breaking winter weather this year has served up.

"Cold, but fun! This is my first time ice fishing," said Vasil Makharashvili from Georgia, the country located on the Black Sea between Turkey and Russia, not the state located between Florida and South Carolina, "The climate in Georgia is much warmer and the snow is in the mountains."

It was Vasil's first time eating chili, too, and he loved it!

Winter archery proved to be a popular new experience. Jill Hall, New Hampshire 4-H Shooting Sports Association Certified Archery Instructor, taught participants archery safety, proper techniques and stance when shooting, and allowed many people their first chance at shooting an arrow.

Inside the new Center, guests warmed up by sipping hot chocolate or eating hot chili or soup and enjoyed refreshments donated by Shaw's, Hannaford, Dirty Dozen and Poland Spring. Three members of the Bauneg Beg Lake Association set the mood by providing live music and singing for visitors sitting by the fireplace and viewing the wildlife display. It was a beautiful day filled with a sense of community and a reminder to all Mainers that even in the midst of a record breaking harsh winter, there is still enjoyment to be had during the coldest of seasons.

Laura Tutoli was the winner of the Cabela's \$50 gift card. Two \$20 gift cards to Play It Again Sports went to Jason Madden and Tanner McCann. Jason Foster and Maria Tibbetts took home Dunkin Donut



Baskets with mugs and bags of coffee. The snowman building raffle went to Gabe Williams and the Snowshoe raffle went to Yifan Wang. They received TREE mugs and pins, limited edition Great Maine Outdoor Weekend posters and chocolate! What a great way to end the fun day!

Special thanks to the sponsors of the day, Bauneg Beg Lake Association, Cabela's, Wells Reserve at Laudholm, Play It Again Sports, Sanford Key Club, Dunkin Donuts, Margaret Chase Smith Elementary School and the 4-H Club of UNH Cooperative Extension, Strafford County.

More photos of the day can be seen at www.facebook.com/treectr.

Andrew and Paul Vandemeulebroecke pull a beauty up from under the ice at the TREE Center's Great Maine Outdoor Weekend.

Participants enjoyed ice fishing despite mounds of snow at the TREE Center's Great Maine Outdoor Weekend.

