

Sun-Times News Group

Reeling and Healing Midwest helps make fishing a metaphor for life

March 19, 2007 by Bob Maciulis

Some of us fish because we were introduced to it as a child.

Others fish because it is a wonderful excuse to be outdoors.

Many anglers enjoy the self-imposed challenges, the regalia, even the incredible exhilaration of a fish tugging on the line. It enables us to be child-like again, to wonder and to consider life's great mysteries in a setting stripped of all the things that seem so inconsequential when sitting on the bank or in a boat, when wading a crystal river.

Fishing is a metaphor for life.

Reeling and Healing Midwest is a non-profit organization that organizes and runs fly fishing retreats for women cancer survivors. Most of the women have never fly fished. Many have never fished. Some have never spent time outside the city where they live.

Every thing needed is provided, from rods and reels, flies and waders to bug dope, even fishing caps. Except for a \$25 registration fee, all meals and accommodations at some of Michigan's most prestigious and historic fishing lodges is provided by Reeling and Healing Midwest.

As a 501©(3) tax-exempt charitable non-profit organization, Reeling and Healing Midwest is entirely donor-supported and staffed by volunteers.

During the two-and-a-half day retreats, participants are paired with volunteer instructors who teach them the fundamentals of casting, wading, reading water and the basics of catching stream trout. Then, each with her own "guide," they fish.

The exhilaration of being outdoors, of standing in a river or sitting in an AuSable float boat, drifting through the incredible north woods that draw anglers from throughout the world, is therapeutic and provides remarkable bonding and camaraderie. Like fishing, the program is built on hope.

Cathy Sero is seeking donations of flies for use during their 2007 retreats (Reeling and Healing Midwest will also share these donated flies with other similar organizations that provide fly fishing retreats, outings and educational experiences). If you tie flies, a couple dozen of your favorite patterns could be the gift of a lifetime. If you aren't a tyer, a check for even the smallest amount would be helpful. Every penny fuels the program.

"What types of flies are needed?" Sero asked. "All types, including trout flies, dries, nymphs, streamers, bass flies, steelhead and salmon flies.

Have flies in your collection that you don't foresee using? (They'll put them to good use.) No flies to donate? Consider donating monies towards the purchase of flies and fly boxes.

Individuals donating five dozen or more flies will be eligible to win raffle prizes of fishing gear, books, outdoor equipment and apparel."

Reeling and Healing Midwest will host as many as a dozen events during 2007, Sero said, facilitating "...over 400 cancer survivors will participate, helped along by dozens of dedicated volunteers and fishing guides who generously donate their time and services to make each retreat a meaningful success.

Donated flies play a large part in the success of these retreats as well."

All donations are tax deductible as permitted by law. Send your flies or donation to: Reeling and Healing Midwest, 1400 N. State Parkway, #8A, Chicago 60610.

For more information about Reeling and Healing Midwest, their programs and volunteer opportunities check out their Web site at www.reelingandhealingmidwest.org or www.IFishOn.org