

Connecticut Lions hosted the first statewide VIP (Visually Impaired Persons) Fishing tournament for adults at Spring Pond in Windsor Locks, on May 31, 2009. The top three winners of the CT VIP Fishing Tournament traveled to NC with their sighted guides and represented CT in both the NC and National VIP Tournaments. In addition to CT, VIPs from West Virginia, South Carolina, North Carolina, Canada, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Utah participated in the tournaments held on the Outer Banks of NC, October 11-14, 2009.

Our CT VIPs were Carol, a West Haven resident, lost her sight at the age of fifteen months; Allan, a 49 year old resident from Bethel, who lost most of his sight in a motorcycle accident and Matt, a 22 year old resident of Cheshire, who became partially sighted as the result of an automobile accident.



In high school, Matt was recognized as a scholar athlete. His trophies for hockey and lacrosse decorate his room. His newest trophy is his First Place CT VIP Trophy. He said thanks to the VIP Fishing Tournament he can successfully compete with other individuals. Matt welcomed the opportunity to interact with other visually impaired persons.

Carol is the Immediate Past President of the Branford Lions. She is currently the Zone 8 chairperson in District 23A. She is also involved with several visually impaired organizations. Carol was impressed with the warmth and hospitality of the NC Lions, and was impressed with their thoughtful Braille version of her week's activities.

Allan is a licensed message therapist. Prior to losing his sight, Allan was a champion water skier. Allan was very enthusiastic about the opportunity to interact with VIPs from different parts of the county and to experience the VIP tournament. In addition to head boat and pier fishing with the VIPs, Allan and his sighted guide also spent time surf casting.

Our fishing tournaments are more than just another day of fishing. The event promotes independent living skills, develops confidence and courage, and teaches safe living skills. All of this happens while having fun.

I want to thank the Lions of Connecticut, BESB, DEP, and the VA Hospital for supporting this project. I would also like to thank the Bristol Leos Club for their assistance in our first fundraiser for the 2010 VIP Fishing Tournaments. Bristol Leos assisted in collecting recyclable soda bottles at the 2009 Berlin Agricultural Fair, raising money not only for the VIP tournament but for their club as well.

Please contact me if you would like to help with the planning of the 2010 tournament, or if you know of a VIP in your community who would like to participate in the junior or senior CT 2010 Fishing Tournaments.

Bob Christensen 860-680-7227 or rachriste1@cs.com