

Rhode Island Lions



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2011 National VIP Fishing Tournament Report

Fellow Lions,

I'm writing to report that, even though we came home empty handed, the hearts and minds of all that traveled to this years National VIP Fishing Tournament were filled with thanks, good feelings and memories. Our National VIP's for this year were: Janice Musco (Lincoln), Norman Boyce (Bristol), and Gerardo Cerino (Providence).

Before I get into the details of the trip, I want to extend my sincere thanks to PDG Dom Branco for taking on the full-time driver duty of vehicle #2. It turned out that the 2010 version of the 8-passenger rated Suburban was not even close to fitting 8 adults for the 12-hr trip. So, 2 vehicles were needed and Dom offered to drive 2 participants in his van while making a valiant effort to follow me to NC.

We headed out at 6:30 AM on Sunday the 16th from Providence and arrived on the Outer Banks of NC 12 hrs later. When we arrived, the CT Dist 23B Lions treated us to a buffet at CT Lion Bob Christiansen's part time home. The VIPs and guides had a good time "trash talking" about who would win the New England Tournament on Tuesday and we eventually left to check into the hotel after a long day. As usual, the accommodations were excellent at the Kill Devil Hills/Kitty Hawk Ramada on the beachfront.

Monday was a day for registration, orientation and relaxing at the hotel beach & pool. The official start of the VIP Tournament was at dinner that night in the Manteo Lions Recreation Center (Breakfast & Dinner are served here by several NC Lions clubs throughout the event)

Tuesday was gorgeous and the Crystal Gayle party boat (1 of 2 used in the tourney) left the dock shortly after 9AM for what turned out to be a fairly sparse day of fishing. The captain did his best to find fish to the extent that we moved so much that we thought we were on a "chase" boat. Meanwhile, the numerous dive-bombing Pelicans and Seabirds were having a feast, which at least made the day entertaining! A boxed lunch of Kentucky Fried Chicken was also a distraction. At 3PM the day was called and the largest total catch was about 2 lbs (Not much for you non-fishermen). That evening we presented the 2nd Annual New England VIP Tourney trophies and, unfortunately, both went to CT.

Wednesday ,, what a difference a day makes,, the National VIP Tournament was held on the recently opened Jeannette's Pier. Is it a beautiful 1000ft concrete pier that has 3 windmills, a great welcome center and recycles it's water for non-potable uses (thankfully).

There was a major storm system just offshore that created 30-40mph winds and about an inch of rain during the tournament that ran from 9AM to 1PM. (A real life experience nearly ¼ mile off shore and 20 ft above the 6ft waves) Fishing was sparse again, even for the locals, but the VIPs were determined to win and refused to give up even though by noon, we were soaked & shivering even though it was 72 degrees out.

When the fishing was over we ate the boxed lunches provided and headed to the hotel where hot showers and/or a soak in the Jacuzzi were the order of the day. We then headed to Manteo Rec Center for dinner and the awards presentations. Before the awards there was a surprise performance by Lion Milton Bullock (One of the original "Platters") and Vivian Reed (from the original Bubbling Brown Sugar Broadway show). They put on a great series of songs that brought back good memories and even 80+ VIP Norm Boyce was singing to them! (Photo evidence available upon request)

Awards were then presented to the 3 top winners of each of the fishing locations (350+ NC VIPs on 2 Boats and 4 Piers) and to the overall winners of the NC VIP Tourney. An interesting statistic is that a total of the 500lbs of fish that were caught, almost 400lbs of that were caught on the 2 northern most piers (Boats fish further South of all piers). This would seem to indicate that the fish migration from the North was just entering these waters.

As stated before, as great time was had by all and, all things considered, everyone got along very well. We left for RI at 4:15 AM on Thursday and the trip home went well.

On Saturday at the New England Lions Governors Conference, I had the semi-pleasant duty of presenting the New England VIP Tourney Championship Plaque to CT Dist 23B DG Lyn Meyers as this years champions. Before the presentation Lion/President/VIP "Wild" Bill who competed in the National Tourney described the experience from a VIP's perspective, which was very inspiring to all. We received a lot of interest from the other New England DG's and representatives and expect to have more competition at next year's tournament. Game On!!!

On behalf of the VIP's and their Guides, I want to extend my sincere thanks to the RILSF, The VIP Committee, RI Lions Clubs, PDG Dom and individuals for their moral and/or financial support in making the RI VIP Tourney a success and; for allowing us to represent RI at the Tournaments in NC.

Please feel free to contact me with and questions or suggestions.
We look forward to your continued support in 2012!

Yours in Lionism,
Ken Barthelemy