

## Kids learn water safety techniques

Over 500 people attended the Portage Family Fish Fair in Ramona Park on Saturday May 19. Many organizations had booths including the Portage Fire Department, which was teaching CPR, the Kalamazoo County Sheriff's Marine Division, DNR or the Department of Natural Resources, and a mix of non-profit and boating or fishing related businesses. Many had hands-on activities for kids, from knot tying to paddling a kayak.



The Kalamazoo Sail and Power Squadron (KSPS) had eight squadron members present to help staff several drills and to answer questions about boating, safety and educational opportunities.

Skipper, our new squadron mascot, attracted a lot of children and adults to the KSPS booth, who wanted to pet him and ask about PFDs for their pets. Thank you Gull Lake Marine for donating Skipper's life vest.

**The PFD Scramble for Kids** After demonstrating how to put on a PFD (Personal Flotation Device or life jacket), the kids scrambled to find one to put on from a big pile. By having many different size life vests, it made it challenging to find the right one. The photo shows not everyone picked the right size or got it on properly. KSPS squadron members showed each child and their parent how to tell if the PFD was the correct size and how to snug it up. We had each child raise both arms, as if they had jumped in deep water, then we gently tugged to make sure the vest wouldn't slip up over their face and arms.



**Reach or Throw Rescue Drills.** We encouraged everyone to participate, even parents. **Exercise one** had Barbie, a partial mannequin, out in the middle of a blue tarp – yelling, “help me, the water’s too deep, I can’t touch bottom and I’m too tired to swim”. Children of all ages loved learning how to safely rescue Barbie or a friend without going in the water. They learned to send someone to get help, while they stayed with Barbie, and looked around for anything long enough to reach her. We had a boat hook, oar, short rope, and swim noodle. We had them practice reaching out, without falling in. We asked them what else they could use if these items weren’t there (like a towel, pants, a sweatshirt, or even a short sleeve shirt – if the victim were close enough to the boat or dock).

**Exercise two** had a highway cone at a distance too far to reach. Here we had boat cushions, a long length of rope, a spare life jacket and a Styrofoam life ring. We had each child practice throwing the life ring and rope to the cone. Two brothers, about 6 and 8 got perfect cone ringers, much to the dismay of their older brother who still would have saved the victim by landing the ring within arm’s reach of the cone.

These water safety exercises were staffed by volunteers from the Kalamazoo Sail and Power Squadron (KSPS), a non-profit organization that promotes safety and fun through boating education. KSPS is one of 22 squadrons in District 9 stretching from South Bend to Mackinaw, and one of over 4,000 squadrons in the United States Power Squadrons. Visit [www.ksp-s-usps.org](http://www.ksp-s-usps.org) for details.



Ready, Set, Wear It Photo taken at Portage Family Fish Fair - Michigan

Also on May 19 at the Portage Family Fish Fair, as well as, all over the US, Canada and in at least six other countries, there was a **Ready, Set, Wear It** photo shoot sponsored by the National Safe Boating Council. The Kalamazoo Sail and Power Squadron (KSPS) was the local sponsor for this photo opportunity to increase the awareness of the importance of life vests. Twenty-four donned life vests for the photo, including Kalamazoo Co. Sheriff Richard Fuller, Portage Parks Dept. Director Bill Deming and his son Dominik, Lyn Bleyer, KSPS Commander, seven other members of the Kalamazoo Sail and Power Squadron and 12 fair visitors – Broderick and Cindy Hanger, Bayley Onstott, Mikayla Larson, Kalyn Konigsberg, Ron Lawson II, R.J. Lawson III, Jonah and Don Verhage, Nolan Lansdale, and Vicki Rafferty-Polk. See if you can spot the following KSPS members – Lyn and Gary Bleyer, Jim and Jerilyn Johnston, Wally Corder, Maurizio (Mike) Galbreath, Lois Whitmore and Phyllis Buskirk. Skipper's dog life vest was donated by Gull Lake Marine. The photo was taken by Under-Sheriff Paul Matyas.

Michigan law states that - All children under the age of 6 (including infants) must wear a life jacket while on the open deck of a moving vessel. So must persons of any age while water skiing, riding a Personal Watercraft or being towed by a boat or PWC. For every passenger on the boat - infant to adult - there must be a US Coast Guard approved life jacket of the proper size for each person. It is recommended that all persons wear a life vest while boating. For more information on boating safety visit [www.ksp-s-usps.org](http://www.ksp-s-usps.org)