

# **Volunteers' generosity spawns new request at Breckenridge: 'Let's go fishing'**

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TYLER—For developmentally challenged adults, hanging out a “gone fishing” sign isn’t always easy, even when a pond outside their door has been stocked with perch and catfish. The pier needs safety rails, the slope of the bank needs to be gentle and the water needs to be fenced off.

But because a Baptist layman noticed a need he could meet and a men’s Sunday school class from another Baptist church pitched in, Breckenridge Village of Tyler residents can now enjoy a pastime many people for granted.

Breckenridge Village, a ministry of Baptist Child and Family Services, is a residential community in Tyler for adults with mild to moderate cognitive/developmental disorders.

Volunteers from Tyler-area Baptist churches stocked the campus pond at Breckenridge Village, made it safe for residents’ use and even donated fishing poles. It immediately became one of the most popular activities for the developmentally disabled adults who live there. (Photo by Linda Taylor/BCFS)

Due to the generosity of community volunteers, residents now are able to fish in a fully stocked pond, surrounded by a safety fence, as well as relax near the pond in a covered rest area.

Linda Taylor, director of development for Breckenridge, said the project began after a visit from Charles Powell who wanted to stock a pond on the community grounds.

Powell, a member of Colonial Hills Baptist Church in Tyler, said the project grew out of a conversation with a Breckenridge resident at a Christmas banquet. The resident told Powell how much he enjoyed fishing at a summer camp, but he said he couldn't fish at Breckenridge.

"We went around asking residents what they would like to have, and several said they really like fishing. So, that's what motivated me to get a pond stocked," he said.

Powell provided Breckenridge with catfish, perch and minnows to get the pond started.

"He bought the fish himself," Taylor said. "He has such a heart for Breckenridge."

After a pond was stocked, volunteers from Sammy Rhodes's Sunday school class at Green Acres Baptist Church in Tyler decided to take the project a step further.

"We found out a pond was stocked, and we knew there was no way our residents could fish safely," said Arthur Kennedy, a member of the class and the parent of a Breckenridge resident. "So, we came up with the idea to put a fence around it for the kids, so the kids could fish over it."

The class, consisting mostly of retirees, built the fence as well as a covered rest area for residents to enjoy.

“We wanted them to be safe and enjoy the same sport Jesus did—fishing,” Kennedy said.

Another Breckenridge parent, Rex Schroeder, provided fishing poles.

“This is the first time we’ve been able to fish right here without having to go somewhere else,” said Taylor.

Breckenridge plans to schedule a fish-fry later this summer for their residents and to celebrate the fully equipped fishing pond, she added.

“It’s always been a resource,” Taylor said. “We just needed people to come in and help.”