

Angle for Calm

WITH FALL FISHING

Feeling stressed? Jump on a boat and cast a line at one of Fairfax County's picturesque waterfront parks! Fall is a great time to go fishing because the cooler water temperature brings fish closer to the surface, and the thrill of catching your own fish gives you a satisfying sense of accomplishment.

"I've caught more fish than he has," declared 12-year-old Marc Russo during a recent fishing class he took with his father, Tim, at Riverbend Park. The father-and-son team are regular participants in the River Fishing by Boat class for different reasons.

"He likes getting out on the river to go fishing, and I like boating and spending time with him," said Tim, an economics professor from Fairfax. "The instruction here is good, they supply everything you need for the class, and the instructors know the river well enough to tell you where the fish tend to hang out."

"What fish live in the Potomac River?" asked one young student as he prepared to go out on a boat with his father and brother.

"You'll find small-mouth bass, catfish, and bluegills," veteran angler and instructor Darryl Brewer enthusiastically replied. "There are large-mouth bass, too, but you have to know how to get to their special places where they tend to hang out."

Through the eyes of each first-time student, Brewer gets to relive his own introduction to fishing more than five decades ago, when he was just 4 years old. Growing up, he often cast a line with his brothers and friends off Long Island, New York, and today, he looks forward to sharing the joy of each student's first catch at Riverbend Park.

"One day, a man and his 6-year-old son went out together for the first time, and the fishing conditions weren't the greatest," he recalled. "I was concerned that the little boy would come back disappointed, but they stuck with it, and you should have seen the look on his face when he caught his first fish! He might have been the happiest kid in Fairfax County that day."

In addition to the fun, Brewer says fishing offers life skills like patience, safety, respect for nature, and what Marc Russo calls the most important tip, "to not stand up in the boat." Each outing provides an opportunity to disconnect from the hectic pace of everyday life and decompress amid tranquil waters and the calming, natural setting with glimpses of bald eagles, turkeys, turtles and other wildlife along the shore. What's more, fishing is a sport anyone can enjoy at any age. It's a great way to bond with family and friends, and the treasured memory of shared experiences lasts a lifetime whether the fish are biting or not.

To find a fishing class near you, turn to the Outdoor Recreation section.

