



“Tackle Box Tim”

Awareness Through Fishing

I’ve said it for a long time. Fishing is a sport that knows no boundaries. It does not recognize age, gender, race, or physical stature. All who care to cast a line can partake in the sport. With so much of the world demographics taking part in the sport, there are opportunities to bring awareness to worthy causes. I’ve been blessed to have taken part in several benefit events through fishing and make it a point to participate as my life schedule allows.

Many others take it upon themselves to highlight causes through angling. One such fisherman is Paul Robertson, President of Tanks Direct, which distributes, sells, and installs storage tanks for water, fuel, and chemicals. Paul has founded Fishing for Muscular Dystrophy (FFMD). A native-born son of Montgomery County, he has always loved fishing and being on the water. He has focused his passion for fishing to raise funds to find a cure for the debilitating disease.

Fifteen years ago Robertson had taken a series of falls. He visited orthopedic doctors because he had a history of knee problems. The doctors were not able to give a reason for the falling incidents. Paul sought out doctors from several renowned institutions such as Johns Hopkins Hospital and the Mayo Clinic. After these consultations, he was diagnosed with Limb-Girdle Muscular Dystrophy (LGMD). He also has a sister who has been given the same diagnosis.

Muscular Dystrophy is a genetic and progressive neuromuscular disease that is currently incurable. For years, Paul downplayed his disease. As his gait got worse he would simply tell people he has a

“bad wheel”. In 2013 he finally admitted to folks that he was dealing with LGMD. In March of last year, he took a major fall in his garage and had a breakdown with the realization of his disease. As his mind cleared he decided to stand up for a cure and use his love for fishing as a vehicle for awareness.

Robertson contacted leadership at the Muscular Dystrophy Association (MDA) to gauge their interest in fielding a fishing team for a fund raising campaign. He sent a letter to MDA with his life background: successful businessman, family man, and living with LGMD. The MDA responded immediately. Paul and the MDA held conference calls and he traveled to MDA headquarters in Chicago. Through June and July last year, he and the MDA hashed out an agreement and FFMD stood up in August, coinciding with the first day of the Ocean City White Marlin Tournament.

FFMD is a stand-alone organization with a multi-year strategic alliance with the MDA. Paul’s organization will submit financial information, a budget, and a marketing strategy in concert with MDA’s goals.

You may ask how the FFMD will raise funds. Robertson’s plan is to generate funds through the fishing team’s sponsor contributions. From the onset, 70 percent of FFMD’s annual surplus will be donated to MDA. Once reserves are built up, 85 percent of the surplus will be donated. In addition, 50 percent of tournament winnings will be given to MDA. His goal is to be able to donate at least \$1 million per year to MDA.

The first sponsor to come aboard was Everglades Boats. Paul says a fully tournament-rigged Everglades 435 center console will be ready for the Jimmy Johnson Billfish Tournament in Key Largo, Florida in March. Yamaha has also joined in sponsorship.

Another question that may arise is, why is fishing such a good way to bring awareness to the disease. From Robertson’s research, fishing

supports 828,000 jobs nationwide. The sport generates \$48 billion in retail sales annually, and over 60 million people fish. Through various tournament trails nationwide, tens of thousands of fans support tournaments by attending the associated weigh-ins and festivals. There aren’t many better opportunities for awareness than the availability for interaction with the fan base. For FFMD and its sponsors, signage on boats and tow vehicles is seen by thousands more as they travel the country from event to event.

Paul has a vigorous schedule for the offshore fishing team this year. They will compete in 15 multi-day tournaments along the eastern seaboard and gulf coast. The FFMD fishing team will attend 6 boat shows and work at 3 MDA camps. He also envisions an inshore saltwater fishing team and national level bass fishing team.

Within those 15 tournaments, the FFMD team will be competing in the mid-Atlantic region. You will find them at the MSSA Championship on

the Chesapeake spring tournament, the OC White Marlin Open, The Mid-Atlantic, The Ocean City Tuna Tournament, and the Virginia Beach Billfish Tournament. You will also find them at the Annapolis Powerboat Show this fall.

Robertson says he will not be merely a “weekend warrior” within FFMD. For the most part, he has turned over operational control of Tanks Direct to his management staff. He will be attending as many tournaments as he can throughout the year. He will also be building awareness through social media. He will push to have 250,000 followers through Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter. Paul wants to become a national spokesman for MDA, telling his story and encouraging others with muscular dystrophy to live life to its fullest.

Fishing gives enjoyment to millions of people worldwide. It bonds people together through all walks of life. Paul Robertson’s mission has a great vision for implementing awareness and raising funds to find a cure for muscular dystrophy. For more information about Fishing for Muscular Dystrophy, visit the website at www.fishingformd.com



Paul Robertson started FFMD to raise funds to aid research for a cure for Muscular Dystrophy.

PSG Flea Market & Show

February 13 & 14, 2016

8AM - 2PM

Earleigh Heights Firehall

161 Ritchie Highway

Severna Park, MD

OC Seaside Boat Show

February 12-14, 2016

10AM - 7PM

Ocean City Convention Center

MSSA Annapolis Chapter

Saltwater Fishing Expo

February 27, 2016

8AM - 3PM

Annapolis Elks Lodge #622

2517 Solomon's Island Rd

Edgewater, MD 21037

MSSA Dorchester Chapter

Fishing, Hunting, Boating Flea Market

February 27

8:00 AM

American Legion Post 91

Cambridge, MD (end of rt. 50 Bridge)

MSSA Susquehanna Chapter

Hanover Fishing and Hunting Outdoor Show

March 5 & 6, 2016

March 5: 8AM - 3PM March 6: 9AM - 2PM

Midway Emergency Services

202 Linden Avenue

Hanover, PA 17331

MSSA Essex Middle River Chapter

March 19 & 29

March 19: 9AM - 4PM March 20: 9AM -

2PM

Commodore Hall

1909 Old Eastern Avenue

Essex, MD 21221

MSSA Southern Maryland Chapter

Solomon's Fishing Fair

April 2 & 3, 2016

8AM - 3PM

Solomon's Firehouse