



For Immediate Release

Focus on Fish Health Photo Contest Winners Announced

All Are Committed to Preserving their Waterways for Future Generations

The pride and thrill of the big catch is the theme of July's winners of the U.S. Department of Agriculture Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (USDA/APHIS) Focus on Fish Health photo contest.

Bernadette Wright of Glenville, New York; Bruce Graves of Postage, Michigan; Brooke Butler of New Matamores, Ohio and Brian Sopko of St. Anne, Illinois, won in the three categories.

Wright's shot of her son, Justin Wright, 6, captured the boy's glee as he displayed a large mouth bass that he and his father, Michael, had just captured off the dock in Moreau Lake State Park, New York. She had just purchased a new camera and taken a photography class, so the win was very sweet, Wright said. The family, including daughter Ashley, 8, love to fish and visit the park every weekend. The photo won in the *Family Fun Fishing or Boating* category.

Bruce sent in a photo of his son Tim Graves, 27, happily raising the 46-inch, 18.5-pound native Muskie that he caught on his pontoon boat on Austin Lake in Portage, Michigan. A car accident at age 21 left Tim a paraplegic, but he has not let his disability get in the way of his love of fishing and hunting. "This I can do," he says. "And I enjoy the sport every chance I get." Bruce's shot won in the *Happiest Boaters on the Lake* Category.

Butler's husband, Sam, took this picture of her showing the 34-pound, 49-inch Muskie she caught, purely by accident, on Chautauqua Lake, New York. "I was just reeling in the line to clear the weeds off of it when this big fella caught hold," she, 36, says. "I think I was more surprised than the fish!" Of course she threw him back in. That's the way with members of the Muskies, Inc. club. She tied with Brian Sopko to win in the *Most Impressive Catch* category.

Sopko's girlfriend snapped this chilly portrait of the ice fisherman's catch on Lake Geneva, Wisconsin, in February of this year. The 38-inch lake trout was lured by a white plastic tube jig, he says. Sopko, 35, has been fishing in all types of weather for as long as he can remember.

All said they were interested in the USDA- sponsored Focus On Fish Health campaign, which targets recreational boaters and fishermen with information about preventing the spread of fish diseases and invasive species, because they are concerned about preserving and protecting the environment where they enjoy their sport. None would ever transfer fish or plants from one body of water to another and all wash their boat and equipment after use.

Contestants have one more month to submit photos at www.FocusOnFishHealth.org and enter the contest. All winners will receive a Focus on Fish Health duffel bag and their photos will be displayed on www.FocusOnFishHealth.org website.

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