

Program angles to help youth learn how to fish

BY ROB BROWN

STAFF REPORTER

A fledgling program that recycles used fishing gear is aiming to attract a new generation of anglers to the sport.

The Gear-Up program collects used fishing equipment, refurbishes it and donates it to youngsters across the city.

The program is the brainchild of Rick Koss, the owner of South Point Douglas-based Hunter Wire. The program was officially launched earlier this year at the Winnipeg Boat Show but had been in the works for the past several years.

"Anglers always have extra gear kicking around. It is never used but we never seem to get rid of it. I was thinking of a place I could take my extra gear. I thought of this refurbishing idea," he said.

Koss discovered that there was no anglers recycling program after contacting Manitoba Fisheries. That prompted him to start his own program and the early response has been encouraging, he



Photo by Rob Brown

Gear-Up's Rick Koss helps Moemoe Deshamps, 9, with a lure last week.

said.

"Almost the entire industry has been supportive, from marine dealers to major retailers to part dealers. Most are helping us collect the tackle and other equipment," he said.

Gear Up program co-ordinator Frank Soja agreed.

"The generosity of businesses has been fantastic," he said. "Also, the

generosity of Manitobans who have donated so much gear so far has been great."

The program distributes the refurbished equipment through school groups and community organizations such as the Boys and Girls Club of Winnipeg.

Last week, a handful of children from the Boys and Girls Club received rods and a packed tackle box.

"This is pretty cool," said Phillip Johnson, 11, after receiving his equipment.

Hunter-Wire has donated warehouse

space to store the donated fishing equipment.

Koss said that while the program is a boon to anglers looking to unload excess equipment, the primary aim is to attract new anglers.

"We hope it gives youth a chance at discovering the sport of fishing, providing them with a chance that they otherwise may not have had," he said.

Koss said organizers hope to provide gear to at least 100 youth during its inaugural year of operation.