Gear Up helps less fortunate reel 'em in

DON **LAMONT**

WHEN avid Winnipeg angler Rick Koss approached Manitoba Fisheries head Joe O'Connor last year at the Mid Canada Boat Show about starting a program to recycle used fishing equipment I don't think he knew what he was getting into.

O'Connor contacted me with Ricks name and number and one year later the program is reality.

Gear Up is designed to collect used fishing equipment, re-furbish it and then share it with others. Donations of this equipment will go to children, families, and those less fortunate so they have the tools needed to get them started in fishing.

Koss, who is the owner of Hunter Wire, is passionate about the idea, willing to put both time and money into the program. He donated 3,000 square feet of warehouse space on Waterfront Drive to develop not only a storage area for the equipment, but also a work shop where groups, organizations and schools will be able to learn how use and fix this equipment. Many of the local tackle and marine dealers support the program, allowing collection boxes to be located on site.

Rick Koss and Water Stewardship Minister Christine Melnick launch the Gear Up program at last week's Mid Canada Boat Show.

Koss says those who attend the workshops will be able to take equipment home at the end of the day. The federally incorporated non-profit group will also take applications from groups and organizations that want to establish loaner programs across the province. In order to get the program off the ground, Fish Futures supported Koss in applying for a Fisheries Enhancement Fund Grant. This funding was recently approved and Koss received a cheque for the Gear Up program at this year's boat show from Manitoba Water Stewardship Minister Christine Melnick. In the last month Winnipegger Frank Soja came on board as program director.

For more information on the program and how you could make a donation, please visit the Gear Up website at www.gearup.ca, The Gear Up Foundation is also looking for volunteers to help refurbish the used equipment.

Anglers Notes:

With the exceptionally warm weather over the last two weeks, travel conditions have deteriorated on our lakes and rivers. In fact it is pretty darn dangerous out there if you are driving on some of the lakes in a vehicle. One of my friends on a trip this past week to Milles Lac in Northwestern Ontario nearly lost his vehicle, while two other trucks who were nearby were not so lucky. Only the fact that one of the trucks had a snowmobile trailer that got hung up saved it from going down over deep water.

He was so shaken he wanted to pass this story on to my readers:

"Just as we were leaving, not even a couple hundred feet from where we were fishing, we saw the truck in front of us go down in their back end. At first we thought it was slush, but soon after we realized they had broken through. As we stopped and got out of my truck, I immediately noticed the ice under my truck was beginning to sink from under it. My SUV was about to go through. I jumped in and hammered it in reverse and managed to pull over to the side to "safer" ice only to see that the other truck's back end at the wheel well was under water. It was still sinking but managed to settle itself since the snowmobile trailer w
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