

OK Kids Day brings record turnout

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The Prairie Dog State Park, in conjunction with Kansas Wildscape, hosted the eleventh annual Outdoor Kansas for Kids Day this past Saturday and had a record turnout.



Along with their parents, 129 youth took part in this year's event, over double the turnout from 2010 when 68 youth participated. It is a program to introduce kids to the beauty and enjoyment of the outdoors.

The children ranged in age from infant to early teens and were treated to three different activities throughout the morning. Due to such a large number involved, they were split up into three separate groups.

One group went to meet with David Vincent, Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks employee, and he showed the children how to use the Laser Hunting and Shooting Simulator, a video laser shooting

game. There were different scenarios that could be chosen, including pheasant, quail, deer, prairie dog and trap shooting. Each child was given many opportunities to shoot the youth-sized laser guns. This simulator was for the children ten years of age and younger.

Those children ten and up went to another area of the park to try their hand at trap shooting with flying clay targets and real shotguns. All of the guns and ammo were provided for the shooters. This event was sponsored by the Department of Wildlife and Parks and The Longspur Chapter of Pheasants Forever.

Another group went off to take part in a fishing clinic sponsored by local fisherman and the Longspur Chapter of Pheasants Forever. All of the poles and bait were provided for the participants. Ollie Kuhn kept the hooks baited and Joe Sweet kept the poles in working order. Seasonal State Park help assisted with casting and reeling in. These volunteers were Luke VanSkike, Jordan Girard, Brandon McChesney and fishery biologist, Taylor Meyers

The third group started at the archery clinic sponsored by the Norton Archery Club. The youth were split into different groups. Those that had never shot before got a quick yet thorough lesson from John Baker of the Norton Archery Club. Those that had shot before went with other Norton Archery Club members to take their aim. Life size animal targets were sit-

ting in different areas and every child had a chance to shoot an arrow at each of these different targets.

After all three groups had spent an hour at each clinic, everyone met back at the park office for a hot dog and a cold drink.

After eating, all of the kids that participated in the OK Kids Day got a prize. Park Manager Toby Kuhn, Americorp worker, Ashley Esslinger, Administrative Specialist, Mindy Yeager-Braun and Brian Haug, Park Rangers, gave these out. Prizes consisted of tackle, fishing poles, tackle boxes, sleeping bags, gift cards to Endzone, flash lights and ball caps from Bass Pro and Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks. Prizes were donated by Kansas Wildscape, Norton Travel and Tourism, Pheasants Forever and Endzone Sports Supply.

Toby Kuhn, Park Manager said, "Thanks to all of the sponsors who donated, prizes, volunteers, drinks and food to make it all possible. It is all about the kids and I think we had a phenomenal turnout!"



(Top left) David Vincent of the Kansas Game and Parks put on the Laser Shot Shooting clinic during the OK Kids Day. Here he helps Payton Bailey try to outshoot her sister, Hannah Bailey.

(Left) John Baker of the Norton Archery Club teaches Emily Miller the proper techniques for shooting a bow. This is one of three clinics put on during the OK Kids Day events. Baker, along with other Archery Club members, volunteers his time to teach others every year.

(Above) Parker Stark was one of 129 youth to take part in this year's OK Kids Day at the Prairie Dog State Park. The fishing clinic seemed to be his favorite activity.

— Telegram photos by Dana Paxton

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