

Mentoring & MinnAqua

Ace of Clubs!

by Michael Kurre, Mentor Coordinator

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Playing cards and the outdoors go together like fishing line and lures. Go Fish, smear, bridge, pinochle, and in this case cribbage was our choice of games and dominating was order of the day. We could do no wrong with double digit hands as the norm and our poor adversaries who came up empty handed and were skunked and even double skunked (you don't have to be a cribbage player to know that can't be good). So they took the only recourse they had and retired the cards and retreated to the safety of conversation.

The banter was the typical guy talk about hunting and fishing, since we were at a Pheasants Forever retreat with the theme of "Focus on Forever" and "Training Trainers". The topic soon turned to my job with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources as the Mentoring Program Coordinator. We discussed the critical factors of recruitment and retention in the outdoors. And as we each presented our backgrounds in the outdoors, it was abundantly clear we all had the passion of connecting our outdoor experiences with others and understood the challenges we face of effectively bring the outdoors to life in the direction of kids and adults.

One member of the humbled team (but a winner in my book) was Wayne Trapp a biology teacher and [Conservation Club](#) advisor for the Waconia School District (Home of the [2012 Governor's Fishing Opener](#)). Wayne informed us he was presenting a "how to start" and "maintain" an after school outdoors program the next day that was designed to promote life skills such as: fishing, charitable volunteering, adventures afield, fund raising and community service. Their motto: *"Expand, Explore and Protect our Natural Resources"*.

The program started with only about 20 students and has grown in 5 short years to almost 300. The [Conservation Club](#) has many an ace in the hole with a fanatical club advisor, passionate parents who volunteer their time soliciting donations and the best possible hand.....the students who do the bulk of the work. Club members are eligible to "letter" with minimum attendance and volunteer requirements such as: developing a yearly action plan of involvement and 1/3 participation, delegate responsibilities to each other and they shuffle in local experts in the field to share their expertise at their weekly and monthly meetings.

If you have the passion, but no aces up your sleeve, [email](#) Wayne, he would love to be dealt-in. Ace of Clubs.....[Waconia Conservation Club](#) that is!

P.S.

[Take A Kid Ice Fishing \(TAKIF\)](#) is February 18 through the 20th, 2012. During TAKIF weekend, anglers 16 and older do not need a license if they are accompanied by a child younger than 16 and are actively participating in Take-A-Kid Ice Fishing Weekend.