

# GOISD students catch fish at Camp Josh

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ONTONOGAN — Students in Gogebic-[Ontonagon](#) Intermediate School District's center-based programs spent Friday morning fishing at Camp Josh.

Jay Pawlak, a teacher with the GOISD, said he has been bringing his students with intellectual impairments to the camp at least twice a year for the last seven years.

"It's a day just to have a U.P. learning experience on fishing, in this case," said Dean Juntunen, a member of the Camp Josh board. "They sure seemed to enjoy it and the fish were pretty hungry."

Pawlak said that for many of the kids, it is their first time fishing. He said many of them are unable to hold rods themselves so the GOISD and the camp provide staff to help the kids.

"It's getting out in the community, meeting new people, seeing new people," said Pawlak. "A lot of our students we are talking about have IQs below 70. So our students are mentally handicapped to a severity. So, having that exposure in the community with different people is a big thing. In fact, that's probably more valuable than the fishing part."

The 28 students reeled in 30 fish, which were filleted for them on site, by coordinator Eugene Lewis. He said he recently retired and wanted to help out and give back to the community. All of the students were able to take a fish home if they chose. After spending the morning fishing, the kids enjoyed a pizza lunch

Cindy Milton, of [Wakefield](#), attended the trip as a grandparent chaperone. She liked that the trip offered the students an opportunity to be outside, which she said they don't get very often.

"It brings everybody together in understanding of everybody else's disabilities or special needs. It's a get-together," said Milton. "I like it because they don't have to be on their iPads and they're getting the sunshine."

"I guess we measure success out here by the number of smiles and I saw lots of them today. Also a lot of fish, so that's definitely a successful day," said Juntunen.

There were also [Ontonagon](#) Area High School students there volunteering from the school's peer-to-peer program.

Camp Josh, a nonprofit 501(c)(3), was formed in 2000 to offer individuals with disabilities a chance to participate in outdoor recreational activities — primarily fishing and hunting. The camp was named after Josh Bader, a young man who suffered from spina bifida and passed away as a teenager. The camp is located on 40 acres of land off of the Cranberry River in [Ontonagon](#). The camp includes a fishing pond stocked with more than 300 rainbow trout donated by the Keewenaw Bay Indian Tribe this summer, according to Juntunen.

The pond, which cycles water directly from the Cranberry River, was underwent landscaping and maintenance this year, said Juntunen. The camp also offers an archery and shooting range, a hunting area, a cabin and a fire pit.

Besides the GOISD, the camp has hosted events this year for Regional Inclusive Community Coalition, an organization for adults with developmental disabilities and a veteran's group, Juntunen said.

The event was the last of the season for Camp Josh, which will reopen in the spring. Events are provided free of charge. For more information, visit [campjosh.org](http://campjosh.org).