

Ohio Mayfly Project teaches foster kids to fly fish

National program taking initial steps in the state

By Mike Moore
Editor

Lewis Center, Ohio — Ohio is taking its initial baby steps in implementing the national Mayfly Project, which pairs foster children with adult mentors for fly fishing.

The state currently has two working projects – one in Cincinnati and another in Columbus – and another on the way in Cleveland.

Pam Allen, an experienced fly fisherman who lives in Lewis Center, is a co-mentor of the Columbus project along with Andy Scott.

It was Scott who actually started the Columbus project.

“He’s had a connection with the foster care system for several years,” Allen said of Scott. “They’ve been a foster family themselves and they were trying to find a way to blend two of his passions – fostering and fly fishing.”

The Mayfly Project is a national non-profit organization based in Arkansas. Its mission statement, according to the organization’s website (www.themayflyproject.com) is to “support children in foster care through fly fishing and introduce them to their local water ecosystems, with a hope that connecting them to a rewarding hobby will provide an opportunity for foster children to have fun, build confidence, and develop a meaningful connection with the outdoors.”

“There are projects going on in all kinds of states,” Allen said. “It started in Arkansas, where the founder is from.”

The projects in Ohio were delayed a bit by the COVID-19 pandemic, but got started in earnest in 2021.

Allen began with the Columbus project last year, serving as the conservation lead.

“So, I was the one who had to help the kids understand some of the conservation concepts,” she said. “They have a really nice curriculum that is fun for the kids.”

Two kids went through the Columbus project last year. The goal for 2022 is to have five or six foster children in the Columbus project, said Allen.

“There’s a whole curricu-



Foster kids involved with The Mayfly Project not only learn to fly fish but they are also taught stream ecology and what makes up a healthy stream.

Photo courtesy Pam Allen

lum based on the stages of the mayfly,” she said. “We also teach them about what makes fly-fishing different. We teach them about what the fish eat and where they live and the kind of water they like. Everything they need to know.

“The whole goal is to teach them that fishing and fly-fishing can give them things that other activities cannot,” Allen said. “Patience, building self-confidence, things they can really benefit from – that all of us tend to benefit from.”

A lot of the instruction is done on a one-on-one basis, thus the small number of children involved, said Allen.

“At each session, each kid is matched up with at least one adult,” she said. “We kind of mix it up – so that these kids have exposure to different mentors so maybe they can find one who they click with. That’s really an important aspect of it.”

Another key aspect is fun, Allen said.

“Every time we go out the primary focus is to have fun and for the kids to have a positive experience with the outdoors,” she said. “And then eventually they’ll figure it out on their own.”

And, there’s fly-fishing activities on the water, of course. The mentors first teach the foster children in the project how to tie a knot, tying flies, and how to cast a fly rod. Then, it’s off to the water.

“In the conservation part of

the curriculum, we teach them proper catch and release, how to handle the fish and those types of things,” Allen said.

Most of the children who come through the project have very little exposure to the outdoors, Allen said.

“It all depends,” she said. “Foster children in the system as a whole don’t have a lot of exposure (to the outdoors). So, if nothing else they’re getting exposed to the calming effect that the outdoors provides and other things that are beneficial.”

Organizers of The Mayfly Project reach out to various foster care agencies to invite kids to join up with the program.

More information can also be found on The Mayfly Project’s national website (www.themayflyproject.com) or on Facebook.

“They don’t have to come directly through a foster care agency,” Allen said. “They can just reach out to us in one way or another.”

How can fly fishing improve the life of a child in foster care? A quote from a caseworker from a project outing answers this question, according to the Mayfly

Project’s website.

“I couldn’t believe the change in behavior and spirit prior to our outing with the Mayfly Project and then post outing – it was night and day,” the caseworker said. “The children came feeling nervous and struggling to stay positive, and then once they started participating in the project their behavior and attitude changed. Seeing the children smiling, feeling good about their accomplishments and themselves, enjoying time in nature, and excited about life, was worth more than we could have ever expected.”

Allen sees big things ahead for the Ohio projects.

“We started small and we want to grow, but not too fast,” she said. “We really want this to be a quality program for these kids who have gone through so much in their life already.”

Those who wish to donate to The Mayfly Project can direct their dollars right into a specific project on the national website.

“We’ve really started a great community in the Central Ohio area who support this,” Allen said. “Fly anglers, river enthusiasts and lots of others have been very supportive of it.”

We Carry a Complete Line of Seed For all Wildlife Food Plots



**Blends • Clovers • Turnips • Brassicas
Soybeans • Cover Crops • Switchgrass**
MERIT SEED
4759 Twp. Rd 366
P.O. Box 205
Berlin, OH 44610
Located behind the Farmstead Restaurant

www.meritseed.com • online store • 800-553-4713

LAND FOR SALE



CONTACT: BRIAN (716) 962-9935

ELMBROOK TIMBER TRAILS & VIEW
\$699,000 / 306 Acres / Chautauqua County, NY
Wooded property with some open, abundant road frontage, great building sites, excellent hunting, timber, ATV trails and a Lake Erie View!

BAUER’S BEAUTY	SPOTLIGHT LISTINGS	CASSADAGA WOODS & WATER
Chautauqua Co., NY	WHITETAILS & TIMBER	Chautauqua Co., NY
201.2 AC. W/Timber \$385,000	Erie Co., PA	136 AC. / \$159,900
	67 AC. / \$258,000	



CONTACT: FRANK (484) 894-2231

CROOP LAKE MASTERPIECE
\$3,200,000 / 453.87 Acres W/House / Luzerne County, PA
Custom Built 3,350 sf., turn-key home on private 10 acre lake with trout stream, fantastic hunting, food plots, miles of trails and completely fenced. The home has 6 bedrooms and 3 full baths, a gourmet kitchen with Viking appliances, 2 large stone fireplaces, radiant floor heat on the lower level and beautiful large decks providing the spectacular view of Croop Lake.



CONTACT: RON (724) 422-5525

RAGER’S REST
\$59,000 / 4.2 Acres W/Garage / Clearfield County, PA
Great rural country location to build your home, camp or park your RV with a garage and all utilities.

IDLEWOOD ACRES	SPOTLIGHT LISTINGS	PRIVATE ACRES
Somerset Co., PA	THE PINE RUN PLACE	Indiana Co., PA
2 AC. W/Cabin, \$120,000	Clearfield Co., PA	38.98 AC. / \$169,000
	11.32 AC. W/House, \$199,000	



CONTACT: JOHN (716) 664-0750

GLEASON’S ACRES
\$395,000 / 191 Acres / Chautauqua County, NY
Wooded property with timber, tillable acres, stream and beaver pond and ideal locations for house or camp.

RED BIRD CORNERS	SPOTLIGHT LISTINGS	SOL’S CUPLA ACRES
Chautauqua Co., NY		Chautauqua Co., NY
22.5 AC. / \$45,900		2.9 AC. / \$21,000



Of course, fly-fishing with a one-on-one adult mentor is part of The Mayfly Project as well.

Photo courtesy Pam Allen



Licensed in New York, Pennsylvania & West Virginia
CALL US TODAY! 716-962-9935

View Our Listings At
WWW.TIMBERLANDREALTY.NET

2018-2021
AMERICA'S
BEST
BROKERAGES