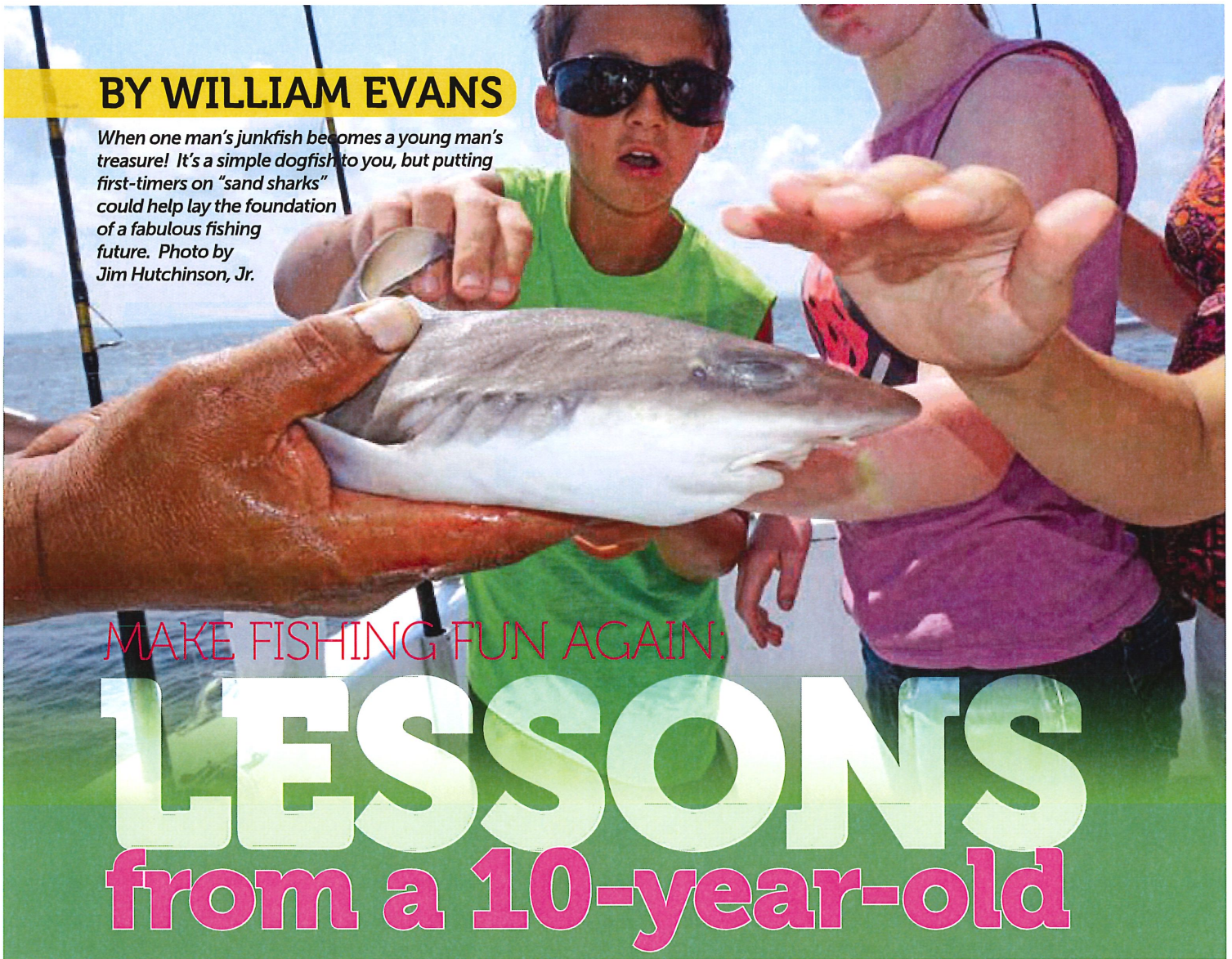


BY WILLIAM EVANS

When one man's junkfish becomes a young man's treasure! It's a simple dogfish to you, but putting first-timers on "sand sharks" could help lay the foundation of a fabulous fishing future. Photo by Jim Hutchinson, Jr.



MAKE FISHING FUN AGAIN!

LESSONS from a 10-year-old

A "captain in training" offers first-hand advice on turning kids into hardcore fishermen.



An IGFA-sponsored trip aboard the Bingo out of Atlantic Highlands with the Father Time group was a great intro to fishing for these kids. Photo by Jim Hutchinson, Jr.



Young Ireland Smith, shown here with Bingo mate Jaime Pabalan, proudly shows off her first ever porgy. Photo by Jim Hutchinson, Jr.

It was a warm sunny morning. The date was August 27, 2010; my second birthday. My mom and dad took me out on the boat to catch my first fluke. We also did the same with my little brother John, on his second birthday. My name is William Evans, son of Capt. Jeff Evans from *C-Witch Sportfishing*.

Since that first trip, my brother and I have caught everything from fluke to mahi (and of course John's mystery beast, the one that got away). We have won the kids category in some tournaments too along the way. During those trips my dad and his friends have always tried to make the trips fun for us kids. We wanted to take this time to share our ideas with you to help make your kids experiences fun too.

EASY DOES IT

One way to keep fishing fun is to not force it. Ask them if they want to go back in or if they want to stay out. Don't force them to stay out even if you are on a big pile of fish. Let them reel in your fish or use your rod and let them cast a few times, even if you're jigging for fluke. If we are being safe then let us explore our abilities. You can teach us basic knots. You never know when we want a new lure and we don't have to hold you (the adult) up. How great would it be if your kids were more self-sufficient than your fishing buddies? It's a win-win situation. We get to show off a new skill and you get to brag about us. Better yet, you get to keep fishing.

MASTER APPRENTICE

Please teach us how to handle different types of equipment. Once we have mastered spinning tackle, show us how to operate that expensive Avet or Penn conventional. Not to cast it, but to drop it down and jig for striped bass or bottom fish. Don't be mad when we backlash. You know you did too; Poppop already told us about the time you tangled him up so bad that he lost that monster weakfish.

SIMPLE, YET HONEST

Teach us that hooks are not toys. Hooks are sharp. We aren't stupid; we know they will stick us. But we still have to be reminded to be careful. Just this November I got stuck with a hook and it was not a fun experience. At the end of the day, trust that we will be careful. Remember when you were our age, tackle boxes and pocket knives were important gifts. Nothing has changed. Trust us.

A SAFE INVESTMENT

Don't make them suffer with the \$4 orange Walmart life jacket. Take them out to buy a comfortable life jacket. Make it a mandatory piece of equipment, but not a punishment. We should have it on anytime we are near the water, (no matter how much we complain) accidents happen. Just ask my brother John. He was carrying the console cover from the dock to hand it to my dad. John couldn't see because the cover was so big. He stepped off the dock and fell straight down between the dock and the boat. Once my dad moved the console cover and there was John in the water. He was in the water hanging on to a killie cart and floating safely thanks to his life jacket. Dad lifted him into the boat

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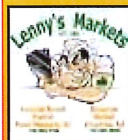
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Spring blues are great for keeping a young angler's attention span in the game at hand; no matter how many gators you've caught in a lifetime, they're still a drag-screaming way of putting fun into fishing for the kids.

and he was unharmed. It may have been a different story without the life jacket.

WATCH & LEARN

Take the time to show us all the cool things in nature. The dolphins, whales, and seals are always cool. Most other kids will only see them on TV. Let's not forget about all the different birds. I have had the opportunity to see ospreys, falcons, cranes, egrets, and of course the majestic bald eagle. You may be used to seeing all of these things, but we kids are not. Let's not forget the science lessons that you can teach us around the bunker pods. You know it is a sight right out of *National Geographic*. The whole circle of life is happening right next to the boat. My dad takes me out of school at least one day each spring to experience it. Yes the stripers and bluefish are there but so are the dolphins, whales and sharks. And sharks are cool!

FALL BACK OPTIONS

We can also go out seining. It is something that most kids have never done. You can show us all of the baby fish and baitfish like minnows, spearing, peanut bunker and crabs. Together we might be able to get the bait you need for that fluke fishing trip and still let us spend time together. Even if we aren't going to be a part of that next trip. What about crabbing?

Have you ever imagined yourself on the deck of a crab boat in deadliest catch? Well we have too. For us, those Maryland style crab pots may as well be the 800-pound

YOU BELONG ON A HOBIE

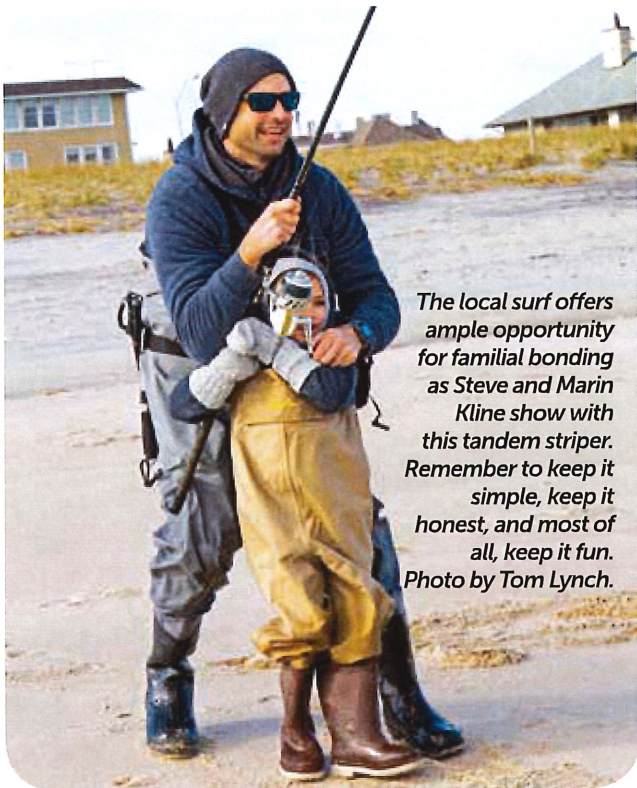
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The local surf offers ample opportunity for familial bonding as Steve and Marin Kline show with this tandem striper. Remember to keep it simple, keep it honest, and most of all, keep it fun. Photo by Tom Lynch.

will have enough crabs to add to our catch of the day. That will give us another fun thing to look forward to besides catching. Plus, we know mom loves flounder stuffed with crab meat.

HELP AT THE HELM

Let your kids drive your boat (with your help of course) and decide the way the trip will go. Try your best to put them on fish as best as you can. Always give them options: to stay where we are or to chase that hot radio bite a little bit further away. You never know we might like catching snapper blues left and right instead of snagging those expensive S&S Bucktails on the wrecks in hopes of catching that one big fluke. Remember for us, catching is more fun than bringing home dinner.

At the end of the day we just want to have fun with you. Make sure we take plenty of pictures. Plenty of snacks, sunscreen, drinks and even more snacks will definitely help keep us from complaining.

I hope this article has helped you come up with ideas to help you and the kids in your life enjoy more time on the water. Remember, if you think you are keeping fishing fun for your kids and yet they still don't like fishing, then you may be doing it wrong.

Bottom line, keep fishing fun! 🐟

The author is a 5th grader at Lillian Dunfee School in Barnegat, NJ. His father, Capt. Jeff, runs C-Witch Sportfishing out of Waretown.

traps that we see on TV. Let's get the permits and throw some pots. We can then "steam out" for a day of fishing. This will give the pots a four- to six-hour soak and then we can haul pots on our way back to the dock. Maybe we

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