

Women in the Outdoors



REELING AND HEALING MIDWEST

By Kerry Speer

In this featured article, I am proud to introduce you to a dynamic organization, which is making great strides in elevating the spirits of women who have been diagnosed with any type of cancer... by simply taking them fishing!

"It's a trout... I caught my first trout!" shouted Ruthanne Tietz, a novice fisher and cancer survivor from Muskegon, Michigan. She jumped up and down with delight, with fly rod in one hand and a trout dangling from a dry fly in the other. The volunteer river guide knelt down, focusing the camera on the fish.

"C'mon - give me a smile and say the magic words," coaxed the guide. With that Ruthanne bellowed Reeling & Healing Midwest's motto for all on the river to hear, "FISH ON!"

Based in Michigan and entering their ninth retreat season, Reeling & Healing Midwest, is a 501(c)(3) non-profit, champions fly fishing wellness retreat for women surviving or battling ANY type of cancer. Their mission is to introduce these women to the healing powers of the sport of fly fishing and provide a one-of-a-kind experience, on and off the water. This is accomplished through the elements of fly fishing, positive camaraderie, peer coaching, the enjoyment of nature and a support network, which in turn renews the spirit and hope of each participant.

With a grassroots approach and local fundraising initia-



Reeling And Healing Midwest is a non-profit 501 (c)(3) organization and is 100% volunteer-staffed with 100% of all contributions directly applied to retreat programs.

tives, Reeling & Healing Midwest covers the cost of all meals, as well as lodging and fly fishing equipment for the participants and volunteers. Retreats are led by experienced fly fishing instructors and professionals. Initial retreats are limited in size, to ensure quality instruction and the creation of a powerful small group dynamic. Whether they are newly diagnosed, or a 20-year survivor, women surviving any type of cancer are encouraged to attend. No previous fishing experience is necessary.

Reeling & Healing Midwest is unique from other organizations, providing similar

retreats, in that they endeavor to continue the fly fishing experience, education, support network and bonds the women create beyond the initial retreat experience. Currently, 98% of the women who attend their first retreat request to return and learn more.

This year, fourteen retreat programs are planned for Michigan, as well as two for Illinois and Wisconsin. The organization is 100% volunteer-staffed, with 100% of all contributions directly applied to retreat programs.

In the fishing world you often hear, "Fish On!" when a fish is hooked. It marks the beginning of a battle with

Reeling And Healing file photo. something wild and unknown. To the women participating in Reeling & Healing Midwest fly fishing wellness retreats, it means much more.

To them, "Fish On!" is a statement of action. "Fish On!" means, "I will embrace life and thrive in my survivorship. It also means: I will continue fighting, continue healing and continue living."

Retreat registration is currently open. If you are interested in participating or volunteering, visit their website at www.FishOn.org, email them at info@FishOn.org, or contact them by phone at 616-855-4017.

HB