



□ *Editor's note: This is the first in a series of feature stories concerning organizations that benefit the Imperial area. Volunteering in a community, through organizations, is a way to pay back for the benefits that the community offers an individual.*

By Carolyn Lee

The Imperial Republican

The Southwest Chapter of the Izaak Walton League, or Ike's, as it is affectionately known, is a small organization with big goals.

In the early 1950s the organization was formed in the area and was called the Chase County Chapter. Later adding members from Dundy, Hitchcock and Hayes Counties, it was renamed the Southwest Chapter of the Izaak Walton League of America.

Presently, the 20 members focus on three main activities each year.

The children's fishing day has been postponed for a few years, but, "We're hoping to get it started again at Champion Lake," according to member Tom Elder.

The lake has been dry the past few years, so the event has been cancelled. Elder said Champion is the perfect site for the event.

"It's safer and easier to handle the little kids there," he noted. "I hope they stock some trout" and other fish in the newly-filled lake.

Ike's also sponsors a catfish tournament at Enders Reservoir in April as a fund-raiser.

"It's a fun project for everybody, and we get good public relations out of it, even though the weather is not always the best," Elder noted.

The tournament has been snowed upon several of the past few years.

A golf tournament at Enders Lake Golf Course is also an annual fund-raiser. The fund raiser allow Ike's to cut back on sponsors for the children's fishing day, Elder said.

Ike's owns a building on Bureau of Reclamation land at Enders Reservoir, and leases from the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission.

Elder said the group has been renovating the building, putting on a new roof and updating the interior. The building may be rented out for events, he noted. It was built in the 1950s.

The main beneficiary of Ike's fund-raising is the children's fishing day. In the future is donating to Izaak Walton League state activities.

"We are starting to get membership back, and we want to get back involved with state activities. Then we'll be on more of an even keel with the state," Elder said.

The Izaak Walton League was formed in 1922 to save outdoor America for future generations. The League's founders, who were avid anglers, named the organization after Izaak Walton, the 17th century author of "The Compleat Angler," a classic book about the art and spirit of fishing.

The organization is completely volunteer. Its mission is to "conserve, maintain, protect, and restore the soil, forest, water and other natural resources of the United States and other lands; to promote means and opportunities for the education of the public with respect to such

resources and their enjoyment and wholesome utilization.”

The president of the chapter is Clint Johnson. Ike's meets the second Tuesday of each month at the cabin at Enders Reservoir, with the meeting following a meal.

For more information, contact Johnson, Elder or Jerry Groff.