

On June 15, 2010, "Companions on a Journey" got "Hooked on Fishing." Over forty members of our group, their children and grandchildren, and the staff of Deiters Funeral Home and Crematory converged on Dixon Lakes in East Peoria, IL to enjoy food, fun, and companionship. The event resulted in a good time had by all, and many fish caught and released.

"Companions on a Journey" is a unique social group comprised of those who have experienced the loss of a loved one. While most are widows and widowers, the group's mission is to companion with one another in order to make the journey of mourning more bearable. Activities include monthly luncheons with programs or entertainment, as well as various social activities such as baseball games, bus trips, theater events, and riverboat cruises.

This particular Tuesday morning, our staff prepared the picnic tables, complete with fruit, donuts and rolls, and juice and coffee.

"Companions" began arriving, some with grandchildren or children, others with a friend. Several were even equipped with their own poles. Chairs, poles, bait, and even assistance with baiting and removing fish was available by Dixon Lakes park district volunteers.

A group of about a dozen members of our Companions group meet every three months to plan the upcoming events. Several members of the group agreed that fishing would be a fun activity, and one that they could invite their friends or families to be a part of with us. Gary and Stephanie Deiters, two of their children, and Carol Ogle, our Companions Coordinator, along with her husband and grandchildren also attended the fun day of fishing. What a wonderful opportunity to

join those we serve by doing something with both their families and ours!

Cameras flashed, worms were lost, and the laughter of both children and adults echoed through the lake area. Some were novice fisherman, while others were obviously pros. Neither mattered as the adventure proved to be special to all who attended!

Through these various activities, “Companions” realize that the opportunity to share time with others who have experienced a similar loss is extremely valuable. They have so much to teach and learn from each other. This sharing with one another, while enjoying a variety of activities is what we feel has made our “Companions on a Journey” group, unique and successful.

It is our belief that the presence of this group has brought life and joy back into the lives of so many in our community. It is our hope that by remembering, sharing, accepting, and learning, healing will begin as they journey through their mourning. One “Companion” summed up the day best of all, by remembering her beloved husband and saying, “We always enjoyed our annual fishing trip together. This brings back lots of good memories.”