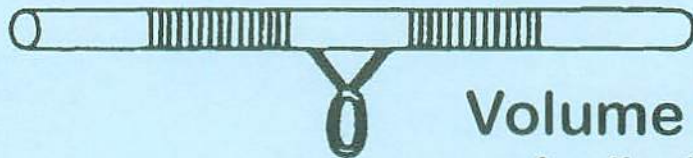


RodCrafters Journal



Sharing Knowledge
Among Rod Builders
for 32 Years

Volume 32, Number 2
April - June 2006



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Big and Little Brothers involved in "Pass It On"



A Publication of the Custom Rod Builders Guild
www.rodguild.com

Pass It On!
The Guild's Commitment to Youth
Neal Hall

The Custom Rod Builders Guild partnered with the Big Brothers Big Sisters (BBBS) organization to help bring a sense of pride and accomplishment to children who are growing up with little opportunity to acquire those qualities on their own. Through their *Pass It On -- Outdoor Mentors program*, BBBS matches caring adults with a passion for the outdoors with Littles that want to learn about the outdoors.

In the fall of 2003, then Guild President Neal Hall was helping his local fly fishing club with a Big-for-a-Day event with the local BBBS agency in Wichita, KS. The event was set up where some of the members of the fly fishing club were matched up with Littles who had no Big Brothers yet. They were set for a day of fly tying and fly fishing and a hamburger barbeque.

The event went so well that Neal could visualize a rod building program that would be beneficial to both CRBG and BBBS. He could see a program where a "Little" and their paired "Big" could each, over the course of a weekend, build a fishing rod. This would take place at a BBBS agency provided facility under the direction of the agency and the guidance of a guild certified instructor using guild provided tools and components from guild sponsors.

Neal met with Mike Christensen, Director of the Kansas BBBS Pass It On program. Neal suggested that the Guild put on rod building classes everywhere that we could find a BBBS agency and a Guild member interested enough to work together. Neal went to many of the Guilds' sponsor manufacturers with the idea and received commitments of free donations for rod building components.

He then went to the Guild's Board of Directors with a proposal in the form of a Memorandum-Of-Understanding (MOU) for a partnership with BBBS Pass It On -- Outdoor Mentors. After some discussion and word-smithing the MOU was signed and the partnership was formed.

Mike praised the program, stating, "Seeing the Littles gain self-confidence through the rod building class has been very rewarding. I'm sure that all of the instructors that have been involved in these classes can all tell stories about how they have seen these kids change in just the short time the class was held.

In many cases, these children don't have a lot of opportunities to succeed at something outside of school. With this class, they walk out with a fishing rod with their name on it that they built all by themselves. It's a pretty neat experience to watch. We really appreciate all that the CRBG has done for us, and that includes all of the instructors and the manufacturers and suppliers who have helped make this happen."

The guild already had three sets of 8 rod wrapping and drying tools in kits that were supplied to members who wanted to teach rod building classes. It was easy to integrate those tools and some added tool sets into the program. The added tools' wooden parts were cut out by volunteers from the Kansas BBBS *Pass It On* program and assembled by Neal. Whenever an agency and CRBG member decide to do a class Neal is notified and he coordinates getting all of the rod components and tools sent to the correct location at the proper time. Neal also keeps track of which manufactures supply components, who gives classes and how many rods are built at each agency.

The *Pass it On* rod building program could not stay active without the dedicated efforts of guild instructors Ron Walter, Larry Thomas, Ray Mazza, Al Hutchinson Joyce Hutchinson, Buzz Butters, Travis Thompson, and Neal Hall who have generously volunteer their time and talents. Equally as important are the donations of the sponsors who include Pac Bay, Batson Enterprises, Lamiglas, St Croix, Flex coat, Gudebrod, and Alert Stamping.

The program is continually looking for more guild members who would like to help and more manufactures and suppliers who would like to donate rod building components to this worthwhile project. All donations are tax deductible through BBBS. As of this writing, the retail dollar amount of the component donations total over \$13,000. There have been a total of 25 classes in 4 states (Kansas 7, Wisconsin 15, NewYork 1, Texas 2). About 200 students (Littles and Bigs) have been taught how to build fishing rods through the 12 hour class.

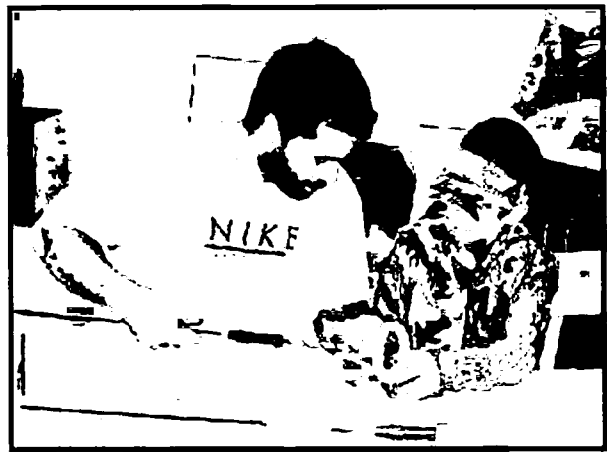
Pass It On began in 1999 as an effort on the part of Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks to bolster the ranks of hunters and fishers and has grown beyond the borders of Kansas to include activities in Alabama, Alaska, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, New York, Pennsylvania, Texas, Virginia and Wisconsin. Thanks to the tremendous support of the National Shooting Sports Foundation, the *Pass It On* program expanded in 2003 with pilot programs in Pennsylvania and Texas. The Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation played a significant role in making this happen as well. The Guild's rod building part of the program began in 2004 with pilot programs in Kansas, Wisconsin, and Texas. The rod building program has now been fully approved by the CRBG.

The Kansas BBBS agency takes the rod building part of the program just one step farther by setting up venues where the Bigs and Littles who have completed the class as well as those who are interested in fishing can go fishing as a group. For the last two years they have traveled to Ted Turners 40,000 acre Z Bar Ranch near Medicine Lodge, KS to catch big, hungry bass and bluegill out of some of the ranch's many watershed lakes.

As a late note to this article:

The Pass It On -- Outdoor Mentors program has now been spun-off as a separate 501(c)3 organization, to enable it to expand to a nation-wide effort to involve more children in outdoor activities. According to Mike, "There is growing interest from BBBS agencies across the nation to become involved with outdoor mentoring activities. The main reason for this is that they are in need of more men to step forward and become Bigs. The waiting lists of Littles are predominately filled with boys. *The Pass It On -- Outdoor Mentors program* focuses on recruiting more men to become mentors...not exclusively men, but that is where the big need is.

The support we have received from CRBG and the manufacturers and suppliers has been instrumental in helping us grow the program. And we are looking forward to a continued partnership with the CRBG as we bring more BBBS agencies into the *Pass It On -- Outdoor Mentors program*.



A Big Brother and his Little brother in Green Bay, Wisconsin.



Neal Hall leading a Kansas BBBS session.



Al and Joyce Hutchinson's first Wisconsin class.



Four Proud BBBS "Littles".