



History of the Blue Valley Bass Club Fishin' Blastoff

On January 7th 1976, the Blue Valley Bass Club's charter members agreed to proceed under their newly established constitution and by-laws, in Seward Nebraska. The 1976 charter members were:

William E. Bivin	Roger M. Dutcher	Dan Kotil
Dennis Brauer	James H. Ehlers	Fred Kowalinski
Wayne Dinkleman	Curly Kotil	George Schmucker

Four years later (1980), the first Blue Valley Bass Club Fishin' Blastoff was held. Upon its inception, the Blastoff was meant to help the club to give back to its community. The most notable charter member, Denny Brauer, has been quoted many times recognizing his roots in the Blue Valley Bass Club. "I'm really proud to have been there at the beginning of the Blue Valley Club," said Brauer. "They are very active in the community, and with education; it's where I got my start" (BassFactory.com, 2011).

In the early years of the club, efforts to promote the sport, develop youth appreciation for fishing, and support a college scholarship, the club members knew they needed a different way to raise funds. "We got tired of holding garage sales and raffles. People also got tired of us hitting them up for money to buy raffle tickets", said Jim Ehlers, one of the charter members. So Jim told Denny one day that he would come up with an idea to resolve their fund raising dilemma. "We never had any money, and we wanted to start a scholarship fund, as well as support other youth events in Seward" said Ehlers in a recent interview. So he put a plan together to present to the club members after a tournament held at Elwood reservoir in 1979. They went back to the campgrounds at Johnson Lake, and Jim presented his grand plan, a pork feed, "just like you do it today", said Ehlers. There was a little risk involved as they hoped to draw in a couple hundred people. The first Blastoff was held at the National Guard Armory in

Seward, and the people packed the house. The club members had agreed to buy any leftover food, but that wasn't necessary, "We ran out of everything" said Ehlers.

The years that followed had the Blastoff inviting displayers, the Nebraska Game and Parks, tackle representatives, and more. "They were climbing all over us to get into our show", said Ehlers. Jim also said the people of the surrounding community loved it. "People were amazed at how just a few guys could pull this off", said Dan Kotil, another charter member. "Everybody worked together", said Kotil. He added that you don't necessarily see that kind of camaraderie in clubs these days. "Everyone in the club pitched in, worked hard, and did what needed to be done", said Kotil. Ehlers and Kotil both said the primary reason, initially, was to raise funds to support the scholarship and youth events in Seward. Today the club awards a scholarship every year and continues to support other community and youth events.

The Blue Valley Fishin' Blastoff grew to be a well-known annual event that attracted vendors and attendees, mostly from Nebraska, and from neighboring states. To help attract attendance, national and local businesses provide donations for door prizes and a raffle. The event traditionally drew in the neighborhood of 500 attendees from all walks of life. They came for the pottery, jewelry, crafts, fishing gear, hunting gear, vacation services, specialty foods and drinks, and many other products and services that are available. Proceeds were used to fund special projects and events in the Seward area.

In recent years, the Blue Valley Bass Club has not been able to hold this event due to the cost involved, **but would like to sincerely thank all those who have participated in years past.** Your loyalty has enabled us to set aside funds that are used to provide an **Annual Scholarship** that is given to **Seward County High School** students who enroll in a college degree program majoring in conservation or an agribusiness field.

In the past, Blue Valley Bass Club has supported many events. Some of those have included: Bowling Lake dock repairs, Independence Landing renovation in Seward, Prom Night, local 4-H clubs, Kids Fishing Clinics in Seward, Stuff the Cruiser (Christmas presents for needy families), the Seward VFW Easter Egg Hunt, and more.

As established by the club bi-laws, and continues today, the Blue Valley Bass Club's purpose is "to stimulate awareness of bass fishing as a major sport...To improve our skills as

Bass Anglers through a fellowship of friendly exchanges of expert bass fishing techniques and ideas, and to promote and encourage youth fishing, and a love for this great recreation...”
(BVBC, 2020).

Unfortunately, the Blastoff is a thing of the past. But, it served the Seward Community and it's Youth for many years. Who knows, some day it may return. But for now, again, thank you to all who have participated in the past.

And, keep your lures wet, and your line tight...good luck on the water!

References

AdvancedAngler.com - Denny Brauer—A True Legend
<https://advancedangler.com/features/denny-brauer-a-true-legend/>
Scroll down to “The Beginnings” to read about

Blue Valley Bass Club (BVBC). (2020). *Chapter Constitution and Bi-Laws; Blue Valley Bass Club*.
Seward, NE: Author