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PRESS RELEASE

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"Gone Fishing" Brings New Meaning to Learning in Cabot

People who think of fishing may see the activity as anything from a chance to have fresh fish for a meal or to have an opportunity to get away from the hectic pace of daily life.

For those reasons and more, 44 Cabot High School FFA members and 88 second- through fourth-grade students from four Cabot elementary schools will be exchanging pencils and paper for poles and nets on **Friday, April 16**.

Much to the surprise of the FFA students and their agriculture teacher, Kevin Woodrow, their decision to "go fish" with the youngsters has gained state and national interest.

The "**Cabot FFA PALS Fishing Adventure**" will be one of several year-round activities sponsored by the Cabot FFA Partners through Active Learning Support (PALS) initiative. The event **will begin at 9:00 a.m.** with students from two elementary schools **and again at 11:45 a.m.** with students from the remaining two schools. They will fish **at the City of Cabot's Community Fishing Pond**, part of the city's new Campground and Kerr Station Roads Development Project.

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PALS is a mentoring program developed by the national FFA organization that matches high school agriculture students with elementary youngsters identified as being in need of positive role models. Together, the elementary students and their PALS explore mutual interests in agricultural and aquatic life. At the same time, the high school students sponsor activities in these areas to help their PALS build trust in others, develop positive self-esteem and social skills, and gain confidence in their schoolwork.

As the Cabot FFA members started last fall to enlist community support for the Fishing Adventure, they received more than they dreamed possible because of the good work of their PALS program.

Shakespeare Fishing Tackle, headquartered in Columbia, South Carolina, and one of the world's leading manufacturers of fishing tackle, is donating 50 fishing combos and other equipment for the participants, plus other fishing "goodies" and event prizes. According to Marketing Manager Roxanne Coleman, Shakespeare makes donations to about 2,500 events each year, but the PALS Fishing Adventure program was chosen for special sponsorship. "We believe young people need chances to 'get away' from the stresses of daily life, just like adults, while learning more about nature. Fishing gives them that opportunity. It is an excellent sport that teaches values and responsibilities that come with appreciating – and protecting – our natural resources," she said. "And," she added, "it's lots of fun!"

The fish of the day will be channel catfish, thanks to the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission. Representatives of the commission's Aquatic Resources Education program at the Joe Hogan State Fish Hatchery in Lonoke will not only be stocking the pond with 500 pounds of the fish, but will also be bringing the agency's Mobile Aquarium

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display, which contains a tank holding 1,000 gallons of water. The Commission sees the event as another opportunity for its Urban Fishing program, which brings relaxing recreational opportunities to families living in urban areas of the state.

Of the approximately 1,600 students at Cabot High School, 230 are enrolled in either Agriculture Education Natural Resources Management or Agricultural Leadership programs of study offered through the Department of Workforce Education. Many of these students are also members of the FFA organization. Their classes are structured to where they can meet with their younger PALS during those class periods.

In addition to participating in the PALS program, Cabot agriculture students also support the community by being active in the Holiday Helpers program, Adopt-a-Highway program, the Lonoke County Fair, and a Greenhouse Outreach program in partnership with the Horticulture program at Arkansas State University-Beebe. Students are also in the process of building a Mobile Outdoor Education Unit.

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