

‘Salmon Derby’ Hooks Warriors and Widows

VFW Post 5297 and its Auxiliary host the second such event for patients at Madigan Army Medical Center near Tacoma, Wash.

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A VFW Post in Washington state has lured veterans from Madigan Army Medical Center out on the river in hopes of bringing joy to the lives of veterans and current service members.

This year’s Warriors and Widows Salmon Derby – the second – featured nearly twice the attendance as its inaugural year, with 53



entrants.

“It’s really a county affair,” said Bob Roche, the event organizer and past Post commander of Post 5297 in Cathlamet, Wash.

After the first couple hours, “it’s just like everybody knows everybody,” according to Roche. “It becomes almost like a family event.”

At least half a dozen widows and two children attended. The president of the Warrior

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Widows Association also attended.

Roche, who served in Vietnam as platoon leader with C Co., 2nd Bn., 7th Air Cav Regt., said similar events have been held on a “small scale for some time.”

“We decided a few years ago, there’s no reason why we can’t push it to a much larger scale,” Roche said. “That’s what led to the tournament.”

Roche said Post 5297 is in a “small county” of less than 4,000 people, so they wanted to involve the community “right from the start.”

“We didn’t want corporate sponsors, and the community’s just rallied behind us,” Roche said.

Local hotels provided rooms, and the Post created an account specifically for donations. There also was assistance from the local American Legion Post, of which Post 5297’s senior vice commander is a member, according to Roche.

“Community-driven” donations also included food, boats, tackle and salmon for fishing.

Roche said the Post reached out to potential participants through Madigan Army Medical Center.

This year’s event also included a course to teach participants how to build fishing rods. The concept emerged after a teacher at the local high school included the project in the curriculum.

For more information on the Warriors and Widows Salmon Derby, contact Post 5297 at (360) 849-3422.

Photo caption: Post 5297 hosts its Warriors and Widows Salmon Derby in August. The event drew 53 participants who caught 21 fish, totaling nearly 350 pounds.

By [Kari Williams](#)