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## Wild Hog Canoe Race nets \$21,000 for LARC



**Standing with a check for \$21,000 from the Wild Hog Canoe Race to LARC are (from left) Keith Maynard, Betty Walker, Justin Maynard and Dave Kunkleman.**

**Story and Photos By Jeff M. Hardison © May 1, 2017 at 10:17 p.m.**

**OTTER CREEK** -- The 40th Annual Wild Hog Canoe and Kayak Race created a new record Monday morning (May 1) when race organizers donated \$21,000 to the Levy County Association for Retarded Citizens.

Standing on the stage of the LARC cafeteria President of the Wild Hog Canoe Race Keith Maynard was joined by Wild Hog Canoe Race Board Member (and one of his sons) Justin Maynard of Williston and Wild Hog Canoe Race Board Member Dave Kunkleman of Dunnellon.

Debbie Maynard (Keith's wife) was in the audience taking pictures. She is among the people who are working behind the scenes.

The race brought a \$20,800 donation last year to LARC.

This year, a record 132 canoes and kayaks were in the race on Saturday (April 22).

This year, the race organizers hit another record number when they donated \$21,000 to LARC. President Maynard said this positive result is thanks to God.

The year before Maynard and his group took it over, there were 39 boats and it generated about \$3,900. Since then, the race has grown each year.

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**Keith Maynard (at right) explains the ministry of the Wild Hog Canoe Race.**

As he opened his presentation Monday morning, Keith Maynard reminded listeners that he and his family took over the operation of the race because he felt called by The Lord to get together with "a group of godly guys" who were willing to accept the responsibility to conduct the race as a ministry.

He said Isaiah 1:17 notes "Learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow." (KJV)

Maynard said God tells people to "relieve the oppressed."

And so he and his team members do what they can do to provide relief to the people who cannot help themselves – the LARC clients.

He mentioned that Micah 6:8 says "He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" (KJV)

He shared his insight from this statement.

"God says it is good to love mercy." Maynard said. "And to love showing mercy. And that's what is in our heart -- to show mercy to these people."

Therefore, he continued, everyone who took part in the Wild Hog Canoe race – the sponsors, the participants, the audience members, the volunteers who brought it to fruition, the vendors and the people who promoted it – everyone who was a part of this was doing God's work, he said.

"We praise God that He has allowed us to take this over and to make a difference," Maynard said. "We give Him all of the honor and the glory."

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He shared with listeners on Monday morning that the end result of the big donation was truly from God's blessings.

About a month before the race, the team was very low on revenue from sponsors – in comparison with the previous few years.

Normally by about one month from the start, he said, there is usually about \$19,000 in the bank for supplies to make it happen. This year, that amount was about \$14,000 at that time, he said.

“So I really started stressing out,” Maynard said. “I kind of take it personally, but it's not what we're doing. It's not about us.

“It's about God,” he continued. “It's about these young men and women (LARC clients) here today. But I take it kind of personally, and I would hate to see their faces if we get less than we did the year before. I'd feel like we let you down”

When Maynard reached a point in his stress, he felt God give him comfort. The best way Maynard can explain this is that God let him know that “It's not about you (Keith Maynard).”

“It's not about my sponsors,” Maynard said. “It's not about my friends – the ones I thought I could count on, because many of them let us down this year.”

He said two sponsors who gave over \$1,000 each last year, did not donate this year, he said.

Several \$500 sponsors and multiple \$200 sponsors also did not donate this year to the race.

“He put peace on my heart that He had this,” Maynard said. “It was in His hands and He would take care of it. And so, somehow, miraculously, we ended up with more money than we ever had in the past – again.”

Last year's record of boats 124 was also exceeded this year – 133 boats, he said.

The crowd at the finish line, from 2:30 that afternoon on into the early evening was the most people he had ever seen there too.

It was between 5 and 6 p.m. when he was able to start packing up “and there were still people in the food lines.”

Maynard said he is thankful for God's blessing, and he knows that He will continue to provide for the needs of LARC.

LARC Director Betty Walker said she greatly appreciates this help from the Wild Hog Canoe Race. Staff workers said they were impressed by how organized the event was, and the addition of the zip line was a plus.

“I will tell you what,” Walker said. “God has got it in control. Everybody in here should be grateful. I know I am very grateful. You know when you tell me ‘Betty we don't have this,’ I say don't stress. God's got it in control.”

Walker said she is thankful to everyone who participated in this event this year.

Bill Slaughter, head of occupational therapy at LARC, said he is thankful to the ministry for helping cover salary of workers and for other expenses that help LARC clients.

Slaughter said the Maynard family is “good people” and he is thankful to them for helping LARC.

All of the staff and clients expressed their gratitude for this significant gift.