

HardisonInk.com

Missionaries overcome the odds; Wild Hog Canoe and Kayak Race scores \$21,000 for LARC again



(from left) Justin Maynard, one of Keith and Debbie Maynard's sons and a member of the Wild Hog Canoe and Kayak Race Board of Directors, Wild Hog Canoe Race Board Member Dave Kunkleman (and Keith Maynard's best friend) and President of the Wild Hog Canoe Race Keith Maynard stand on the stage before the check presentation on Tuesday morning (May 29) at the LARC campus in the Town of Otter Creek.

Story and Photos

By Jeff M. Hardison © May 29, 2017 at 10:08 p.m.

OTTER CREEK -- The 41st Annual Wild Hog Canoe and Kayak Race tied its own highest record for donations from the year before as was shown when race organizers donated \$21,000 to the Levy County Association for Retarded Citizens on Tuesday morning (May 29).



(from left) Justin Maynard holds the big representation of the \$21,000 check to LARC as his father Keith Maynard speaks about this year's race and Dave Kunkleman applauds.

HardisonInk.com



Betty Walker holds the plaque she presented to Keith Maynard.



(from left) President of the LARC Board of Directors Randy Stefanelli, LARC Assistant Director Bill Slaughter, Justin Maynard, Keith Maynard, LARC Executive Director Betty Walker and Dave Kunkleman stand with the large check, the actual check and the plaque that was presented by Walker to Keith Maynard.

HardisonInk.com



Standing with their paddles presented during the program Tuesday are (from left) Harry Jenkins, Deborah Morse, Jean Seamon and Myrle Santerfeit for their help at the race this year.

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. These are three of the five Wild Hog Canoe Race Board members.

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

This tie of the record-making donation last year, however, did not occur from more race participants or from a set of 100 percent of loyal donors. Instead, as always since the Maynard family and colleagues accepted this mission, it happened because God gave the supporters what was needed to accomplish the mission, President of the Wild Hog Canoe Race Keith Maynard said.

The story he told of the river that flowed this year showed paddlers finding the best-ever conditions, which is in contrast with the drought-stricken route of last year that caused several first-time competitors last year to vow not to return for the 2018 event. The whole saga of the event, though, was captured by Keith Maynard as he shared with listeners his message about this fundraiser to help individuals and families meet some special needs.

The race is a very difficult task, President Maynard said, from the pre-registration phase, to setting it up through taking it down.

HardisonInk.com

“I wanted everyone to know,” he continued, “that we are thankful that God has chosen us to do this for y’all. It is such a blessing to us.”

When Maynard and his colleagues accepted the duties of the Wild Hog Canoe and Kayak Race six-plus years ago, he said, they took it over as a ministry. To be able to provide for the clients and others connected with LARC in a special way, he said, is the reason everyone dedicates as much as they do to make the vent succeed.

“So far every year,” Maynard said, “God has increased the amount of boats we have in the race. And has even supplied more money than the previous year. But I can say this year was a little bit different.”

The Wild Hog Canoe Race organizers faced several problems this past year, Maynard said. Fourteen to 16 major sponsors chose against renewing this year, he said.

“The ones that did come back,” he continued, “stepped it up to the next level. Many went to the \$500 level, when they were at the \$200 level.”

Maynard took a moment to speak about one particular sponsor. Rodney Wade of Wade Custom Homes has been a strong sponsor every year, Maynard said. He has been the finish line sponsor since the group took over the race six years ago.

This year, he wrote a check for \$2,500 as a donation, Maynard said. The Wade family has gone above and beyond to help LARC, Maynard said.

“We were also down on boats this year,” Maynard said. “Last year, we had 138 boats in the race. This year, we only had 107.”

Thirty-one boats at \$40 a boat also decreased the amount the group could donate to LARC, he said.

Last year’s water levels, he said, is what he is attributing to the decreased participation in boaters.

Daniel Maynard has raced during the past 10 years, Keith Maynard said of his son.

“He said this was the easiest, most enjoyable race he had ever been in,” Maynard said. “So, I think that is really going to boost attendance next year.”

He said this was a difficult year, adding that God is faithful.

“We are thankful in getting to serve you,” Maynard said to the people of LARC. “We just feel so blessed to be called of God to do this for you. It is a lot of work; but I am going to tell you, it is a lot of fun. We get a lot of enjoyment out of doing this for you.”

While there were fewer boats and some sponsors did not donate this year, the crowd at the finish line was the biggest ever, Maynard said.

When he bought food, he wondered if he had purchased too much because of the reduced number of boaters. However, it worked out very well.

“We bought (an amount of food) expecting God to do something,” he said. “We bought 200 pounds of (French) fries. We had one bag left. We had 200 hotdogs. One hotdog left. We had 200 hamburgers. No hamburgers left. We bought 100 pounds of fish. There was one bag left. It was a blessing to see how God utilized all that food, and even though we were down on boaters, we were not down on attendance at the finish line.”

The people “stayed and they stayed, and they kept eating and eating. It was a blessing”

Maynard said he is thankful for the awesome set of volunteers, who come year after year.

“It looked like we were going to be short on volunteers this year,” he added, “and the staff from LARC stepped in and filled that gap. I thank every one of you for what y’all

HardisonInk.com

did.”

Before presenting the check, Maynard said “This is God’s ministry, and He is the one who provides.”

Even with a lower participation rate of boaters, and other hardships – including a first-ever \$1,500 fee for legal services – Maynard was able to present the check that ties with last year’s highest ever donation from the Wild Hog Canoe and Kayak Race.

After he made his presentation, LARC Executive Director Betty Walker gave him a plaque with a picture from this year’s race and the inscription read “In appreciation to Keith Maynard for countless hours and year-long preparation to the Wild Hog Canoe & Kayak Race benefitting the Levy ARC and our community. Your vision, leadership and support continue to improve and expand the event every year. Thank you and your great team of helpers.”

Director Walker also presented 41st Annual Wild Hog Canoe & Kayak Race paddles to Harry Jenkins, Deborah Morse, Jean Seamon and Myrle Santerfeit for their help at the race this year.

Jenkins, who provided the wild hog as another part of the fundraiser, said he plans to lead the Ride To Provide program this year. The Ride To Provide was started long ago by Sean Mullins and family. This is a 60-mile motorcycle ride through the rural areas in this part of Florida.

Motorcyclists are escorted by Levy County Sheriff’s Office deputies and this is another fundraiser for LARC.

At the conclusion of the presentation, LARC clients told the donors that they are very thankful for the gifts they have given to help keep LARC going.