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## Poker Paddle fundraiser helps Gilchrist County students



**Dana Nicholson of Bell accepts her grand prize kayak from Gilchrist County Rotary Club President Aaron Haynes.**

**Story and Photos  
By Holly Creel, Rotarian  
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**ON THE RIVERS --** The Gilchrist County Rotary Club's Annual Poker Paddle for Interact Students at Bell and Trenton High Schools was a huge success!

**Sara Beth Lee of Live Oak Interact won the student prize.**



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**Bell High School Interact student Kaylee Douglas**



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Thirty-six paddlers, including 11 Interact students and three Interact teachers-sponsors **launched** their boats **on the Ichetucknee River** early Saturday morning (Sept. 29) and paddled six miles to Ellie Rays Campground on the **Santa Fe River**.

Along the way, each paddler drew playing cards from Rotarians on pontoon boats stationed along the river. It was a beautiful sunny day and everyone had a fun time on the water collecting their best poker hand.

Before getting on the bus to head to our launch site, Rotary Club Past President Bob Clemons led us in prayer. Then, Trenton Interact President Alexis Haynes and Bell Interact President Sahara Henderson lead the crowd in reciting The Rotary Four Way Test, which set the stage for how we would all conduct our behavior for the rest of the day.

Dana Nicholson of Bell won the best poker hand and was awarded a kayak, paddle, and one-year pass for free transportation by Anderson Outdoors Adventures. The student prize was awarded to Sarah Beth Lee from the Live Oak High School Interact Club. Tom Colonel was the 50-50 raffle winner and dozens of raffle prizes were distributed while participants enjoyed a grilled lunch on the Santa Fe River.

Rotary President Aaron Haynes said he was thrilled with the success of this year's event - the day was beautiful, monies were raised to support our Interact students and everyone had a really good time! A perfect day of adventure, fun and fellowship! Aaron noted that we grew from six paddlers last year to 36 paddlers this year - next year we may need a second school bus to transport all our paddlers!

Rotarian Jo Buckles, Chairperson of the event, thanked everyone for making this day so successful and especially thanked all of our Gold and Silver Sponsors for their financial support. Special thanks to Charlie Anderson, from Anderson Outdoors Adventures, who did a great job renting kayaks and safety equipment and transporting all of the paddlers and boats to our launch site on the Ichetucknee River. Thanks also to Bass Pro Shops for their support with raffle prizes and to Ellie Rays for providing such a beautiful venue and great food.

The day was a tremendous success and was fun, fun, fun!