



Shreveport artist Don Edwards continues to thrill the crowd with his paintings. Edwards was the artist for the 2011 Bass Unlimited Poster and has been a faithful supporter ever since. His original Giclee "Shady Pocket" was auctioned off during the evening by Auctioneer Kevin McDonald. (Photo by John Toliver)

Thirteenth Annual TBLA Bass Unlimited – Back A Great Fighter Banquet and Auction a GRAND Success!
By
Pamela Toliver

Cypress Bend Park Pavilion on beautiful Toledo Bend Lake was the setting for the thirteenth annual TBLA

Bass Unlimited Banquet and Auction on April 17, 2015. The event, coordinated by Ned Goodeaux, marked the culmination of Toledo Bend Lake Association's (TBLA's)

major fundraiser for projects to improve the Lake and benefit the surrounding community.

More than 600 spirited TBLA members and Lake supporters gathered to enjoy the warm weather, the traditional steak dinner, visit with friends, drop tickets into drop boxes in hopes of winning prizes, and bid on live auction items. The Banquet is a much-anticipated annual event where good friends, families, and Lake supporters gather to contribute to TBLA's mission by purchasing banquet tickets, raffle tickets, prize tickets for drop boxes, TBLA memorabilia and bid on their favorite items. The stage area of the pavilion was decorated by Debbie Nichols



Bill Galligan, Grand Prize Coordinator, supervises while Macyn Douget pulls the winning ticket for the 2015 Tracker Pro Team 190 TX Bass Boat with a 115 HP Mercury 4 stroke motor. This year's lucky grand prize winner was Greg Savoy of the Lafayette area. (Photo by John Toliver)

and her talented staff who hung netting and fish around the TBLA logo on a background of black and placed greenery, anchors, and plumes on the base to create an atmosphere of the Lake at night. The crowd was welcomed by Mike Randolph, Emcee for the evening, and John Toliver, TBLA President, who led the group in the Pledge of Allegiance and called for a moment of silence in honor of our troops in the military and law enforcement officers who provide and protect the freedoms we have in this country. Toliver also introduced special guests, Will Newlin, President of the newly formed national Bass Unlimited Foundation. He and his wife, Carol, of Terre Haute, Indiana, traveled to Many just to attend this annual banquet and see how a highly successful bass unlimited banquet is done on Toledo Bend!

After dinner, Emcee Randolph introduced Kevin McDonald, master auctioneer, who conducted the live auction for his 11th year. Villis Dowden, Jarrett Thaxton, Sean Kinney, and Phillip Carson, all of the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, served as spotters to identify bidders. Items sold during the live auction brought in an estimated \$25,000. The



Auctioneer Kevin McDonald kept the crowd excited and bidding throughout the auction. Two original wood carvings were sold during the evening—one eagle and this LSU Mike the Tiger, pictured with its new owner, Jarrod Romero of Lafayette, who won the bidding at \$4,500. Both carvings are over 4' tall. (Photo by John Toliver)

grand prize raffle for a 2015 Tracker Pro Team 190 TX Bass Boat with a 115 HP Mercury 4 stroke motor valued at almost \$20,000 was won by Greg Savoy of the Lafayette area.

TBLA thanks our 2015 major sponsors and supporters who graciously donated their money, time, and talents toward making this event a success:

- Toledo Town and Tackle for funding the TBLA caps;
- Nichols for funding the TBLA caps and for decorating the stage;

- Julian Foy Chevrolet Buick GMC and Toledo Town Hardware and Supply for the visors;
- Toledo Bend Lakeside Realty for the drink cups;
- First Choice Real Estate for the koozies;
- Sabine State Bank for donating the TBLA T-shirts;
- Shelby Savings Bank of Hemphill and A Real Estate Connection for the TBLA towels;
- Coca-Cola for supplying soft drinks and Original Water & Air, LLC, for bottled water;
- More than 50 businesses and individuals who sponsored tables;
- The gracious individuals, organizations, and businesses that donated items for door prizes, drop boxes, and the live auctions;

Without the support of all those who contributed to the event—whether through contributions of money or donations of goods, services, or time—we thank you.



This group of TBLA members represent many of those who contributed their time and talents to making the banquet such a success. There are many other volunteers who were unavailable for the photo. (Photo by John Toliver)

For over thirteen years, funds raised through this annual banquet have helped TBLA support the Sabine River Authority, Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, and various organizations in

communities surrounding the Lake. TBLA has contributed more than \$700,000 to numerous projects such co-sponsoring construction of public piers, boat launches, and boat lane markers in and around the Lake; supporting numerous youth endeavors to promote art, golf and fishing; sponsoring improvements to community buildings and structures; sponsoring, funding, and administering the Toledo Bend Lunker Bass catch and release fish replica program; purchasing wood duck boxes to promote wildlife habitat and enhancement; and providing funds to SRA-LA and the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries toward purchase of barges and boats to service and manage the Lake and assisted SRA in the purchase of boat lane markers.

The goal of TBLA is to improve the quality of Toledo Bend Lake and the amenities surrounding it and to promote stewarding the environment and aquatic integrity of the Lake to perpetuate it as a world class fishery and recreational resource area.