


RBFF State R3 Program Grants
Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries: "Teach a Friend to Fish"



Overview

The goal of VA Department of Game & Inland Fisheries' (DGIF) *Teach a Friend to Fish* campaign was to motivate and incentivize **current anglers** in Virginia to **recruit new people to fishing**. DGIF worked with Brandt Information Services to develop a referral process in the Go Outdoors Virginia license system for current customers to generate and **send a unique referral code to anyone to buy their first fishing license in Virginia**. If the current customer sent a code and it was successfully used by a new customer to buy a license, then both parties received a free gift. Participants were also prompted to go out fishing together and share their experience through Instagram to win additional prizes through a sweepstakes.



Partners

- Brandt Information Services
- Green Top Hunting and Fishing



Benefits

The *Teach a Friend to Fish* campaign was successful in increasing new customers but it **also helped jumpstart the building of the license referral process through DGIF's Go Outdoors (GOV) license system**. This process is now a permanent fixture on all customer accounts and allows DGIF to develop recurring marketing programs throughout the year and apply it to other activities such as hunting. Referral reward programs may remain effective or improve as more participants adopt the GOV system to purchase licenses and are exposed to the program. An additional benefit of this campaign is the ability to survey participants to gain valuable information to help improve this campaign in the future. Each year, DGIF can utilize this survey to increase its knowledge of participants and fine-tune the campaign to maximize its impact on fishing participation in Virginia. Evaluation should continue at regular intervals to determine if participants, especially new participants, re-purchase licenses in the future.



Results

June to August 2018: 1,170 referral codes generated, 425 new customers created and \$12,913 in revenue earned. Important survey results include:

- 1) A majority of code referrers (67.3%, n = 138) reported that they had fished with their code receiver. Another 28.8% (n = 58) reported that they intend to fish with the person they sent the code to.
- 2) 74% of new customers fished after receiving a referral code.
- 3) Code referrers most often sent codes to friends, followed by adult family members, then significant others, and finally young family members.
- 4) Code referrers reported that few of the code receivers were completely inexperienced anglers. Only 10.2% of the code referrers reported that the code receiver had never fished before. Half (49.5%) of the referrers reported that code receivers had recently fished. Referrers that sent codes to significant others most often reported that those receivers had previously (not recently) fished (45.2%) or never fished (16.7%).
- 5) New anglers were nearly 50% female.



VIRGINIA'S
**Stewards
of the
Outdoors**
#VA Stewards

Refer A Friend To Join You Outdoors

1. Generate your referral code at License.GoOutdoorsVirginia.com
2. Your friend uses your code at checkout when buying their first fishing, hunting, or wildlife license
3. We mail you BOTH a free hat!

[Visit License.GoOutdoorsVA.com](http://Visit.License.GoOutdoorsVA.com)

Don't forget to share your experiences on Instagram - check out the prizes for our [Instagram Photo Contest!](#)

Prize 1: Bass Pro Shops Bassnet Combo Rod & Reel - Satchel Bag	Prize 2: DGIF 100 Year Limited Edition Collector's Knife	Prize 3: \$50 GIFT CARD to ShopDGIF.com
		

\$50

Copy of promotional email sent to recruit participants.



Support

“This campaign is an innovative idea that demonstrates how DGIF and our R3 Coordinator are thinking outside the box to increase recruitment and meet our R3 goals”
- Brian Moyer, Assistant Director of Outreach



Lessons Learned & Future Plans

Email messages sent directly to current fishing license holders **generated 58% revenue for this campaign** and was the most effective method to generate conversions from this target audience. A **better-defined social media strategy** and understanding of how this audience uses social media is needed in order to improve future campaigns. A key lesson learned was that current anglers preferred a product with fishing utility as opposed to a hat or other item as the free gift. In the short-term, changing the reward to a product with fishing utility may improve referral rates. Long-term, this program is likely to have diminishing returns if the requirement for participation is to recruit someone that has never held a license. To maximize staff efficiency, the program could become biennial, or run every few years. Greater rewards may provide enough of an incentive to prompt participation from those who are aware of the program but have not yet participated.



Methodology

Referral programs work because the offer or call to action is delivered to a potential customer by someone they know and trust rather than a business. The survey results support this by showing that most code referrers sent their code to friend, adult family member, or significant other. The methodology behind this campaign was to utilize this practice in an effort to recruit new anglers but also to discover what incentives would inspire current anglers to recruit and how important those incentives are in their motivations. DGIF motivated current anglers to act because over 1,000 codes were generated. The highest rated motivations for participation were to introduce someone to fishing and recruiting someone to go fishing with. The free gift was the next highest motivation and the coupon to a sporting goods store was the weakest motivation. Motivations were mostly driven by a desire to participate with someone rather than the prizes. Evaluation of this campaign also revealed that new anglers were not the primary recipients of the referral codes. This indicates that angler reactivation may represent the most important objective for this type of campaign. Females have been identified as a critical group for recruitment, and they redeemed codes in the program at a high rate. Based on the DGIF license database, over half of the redeemers were female. If this recruitment and reactivation effort can be sustained, this referral program would represent one of the most effective R3 programs for women.

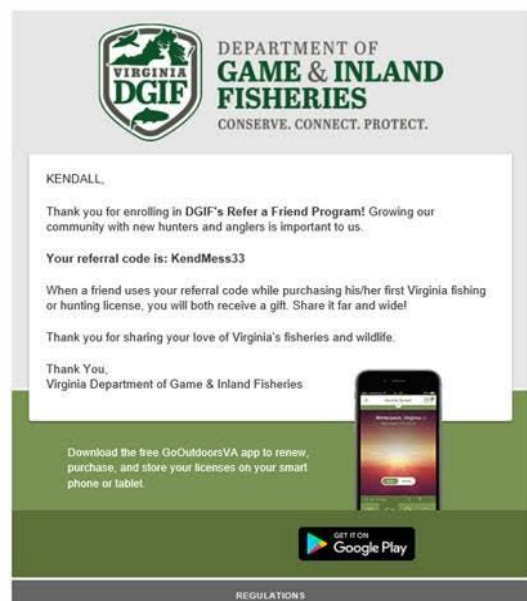


Referral incentive - “Stewards of the Outdoors” hat



Contact Info

Edward Herndon, R3 Coordinator
Phone - 804-367-0585
Edward.Herndon@dgif.virginia.gov



Automatic email sent to current anglers who generated a code.