

TBLA'S BASS UNLIMITED
BANQUET & AUCTION
A BIG SUCCESS

by Ramona Moore



The Toledo Bend Lake Association's (TBLA) 2023 20th Annual Bass Unlimited Back-A-Great-Fighter Banquet and Auction was a tremendous success. It was a beautiful evening that defied the early-week weather forecast. The sold out event began with over 600 guests, sponsors and volunteers browsing items available in both the Silent and Live Auctions, and the raffle drop boxes, while Capt. Steve "Scobby" Stubbe of Mudfish Adventures gave fly fishing demonstrations, and Emcee Ricky Yeldell mingled throughout the crowd.

TBLA President Gary Moore announced the 2023 Glynn Carver Memorial College Scholarship winner, Katie McClure of Hemphill High School for \$6000, and the winners of the TBLA College Scholarship, Matea Whittington of Zwolle High School for \$3000, and Bailey Strother of Hemphill High School for \$1,000. Then he recognized Dinah Medine, the outgoing Toledo Bend Lunker Bass Program Coordinator, who has faithfully served in that capacity for 18 years. Afterward, the delicious BBQ dinner provided by Brisket House of Jena, Louisiana, was served.

A high point of the evening was the entire audience participating in the singing of the National Anthem. Auctioneer Kevin McDonald took the stage and kicked off the evening's main event with the live auction. The first auction item was a "Patriot Package" including a carved cedar American flag, and the enthusiastic bidding set the tone for the entire evening. Several "one of a kind" items were also sold in the live auction during the evening, including a greenhouse, culinary dining experiences, and a custom cypress wood dining table. LSU fans showed up big in the evening when a custom LSU firepit sold for \$3300, and a Scottie Lucas original LSU Toledo Bend Lunker Replica and custom rod and reel by Rick Wriborg sold for \$2000.

To conclude the Banquet, Grand Prize Raffle coordinator Bruce Rogers conducted the live drawing for the first two guns in the 2023-2024 52-Gun Grand Prize Raffle. Tim Achee of Hemphill, Texas, won the Ruger American "Go Wild" 6.5 Creedmore Rifle, and Keith Vasocu of Robeline, Louisiana, won the ATI Cavalry 12 Gauge over/under Shotgun. The night culminated with the "Ginormous Door Prize", a \$2000 Kamado Joe Grill sponsored by Goldman Marine & Equipment, that was won by Anita Thedford of Hemphill, Texas.

TBLA thanks the 2023 sponsors, supporters, and volunteers who graciously donated time, merchandise, money, and talents toward making this event a success. Early estimates of the night's events indicate more than \$100,000 was raised during the evening. These monies are used not only to fund the Toledo Bend Lunker Bass replicas but also college scholarships for deserving students, re-stocking Florida Bass fingerlings into the Lake, assisting High School fishing and 4-H shooting teams, artificial reefs, and many other worthwhile projects around the Lake.

TBLA is grateful to everyone for making this Bass Unlimited Banquet an occasion to remember and hope that you put Friday, April 19, 2024, on your calendar for next year.