

Advantage Trailer Brings Chicago No Limits Fishing Dream to Reality

Wheelchair accessible boat ready for adaptive fishing expeditions on Chicago River and Lake Michigan



Carol Stream, Illinois Jul 18, 2023 ([Issuewire.com](https://www.issuewire.com)) - Ken Carwell, of [Chicago Adaptive Sports](https://www.chicagoadaptive.org), and his friend Dave Hanson wanted to take individuals with disabilities on fishing trips on the Chicago River and Lake Michigan. But they faced a major roadblock: their boat wasn't wheelchair accessible. They turned to [Advantage Trailer](https://www.advantagetrailer.com) to transform the boat into a fully accessible fishing platform for up to six people.

"When I got the boat, it was a 22-foot pleasure craft. We didn't know anything," said Carwell, Treasurer of Chicago Adaptive Sports. "We started talking with Advantage Trailer and all the sudden there were discussions on, 'How do you do this?', 'How do you do that?', 'What does this look like?' My favorite was, 'Here's what we did,' and it was awesome every time."

Carwell, who lost his right leg to acrona sarcoma bone cancer in 2014, has been fishing since he was seven or eight years old. When his leg was amputated, he had to figure out how to continue his love for

fishing.

"What being part of this community has taught me is that everything is based on problem solving," Carwell explained. "What are the problems you face every day to be able to do something? Fishing was no exception. We had to figure out how to get down the stairs, how to traverse the area where the boat is, how to enter the boat, how to be able to reposition on the boat. All those things came into play as we problem solved how I could fish again."

This year, Carwell and Hanson founded [Chicago No Limits Fishing](#) in partnership with the Chicago Park District with a mission to provide fishing opportunities to individuals with disabilities at no cost, regardless of age, race, or gender.

"There's a moment when you're fishing when you set the hook and the fish pulls back that is unlike anything else," Carwell said. "People who are in our disability community have a variety of reasons that they're part of it. Some are actions that happened at birth; some are cerebral palsy; there are people who were involved in an accident; spinal cord injuries. Our goal is to have everybody have the opportunity to get on a boat safely and catch fish and experience that opportunity to be outdoors to enjoy what fishing has to offer."

The group bought a used 22-foot Bennington pontoon boat that had been sitting in a field for about two years. While they were happy to have a boat, there were two big problems. Since it had been sitting unused for years, there was no guarantee it would even float, and it wasn't wheelchair accessible.

With the approval and support of service manager Mark Behrendt, the team at Advantage Trailer met with Carwell and Hanson and got to work fixing up the boat.

Fabricators Paul Caruso and Jon Newbolds took the lead on the project. They removed the railings and added larger side doors, enlarged the front doors, added airline track to the floor, cut holes in the floor and installed four seat bases, mounted a new captain's seat, installed new LED docking lights and navigation lights and wired them to the dashboard switches, updated the wiring and power capabilities for a trolling motor and depth finder, installed a 150-amp power line in the breaker, and installed and wired new battery boxes and batteries.

When all was said and done, Carwell said it didn't necessarily match what his original vision was. Instead, it was far better than that.

"So much of the world today is people don't solve problems," Carwell explained. "But so much of this project was taking something that didn't exist and solving the problem. Here's our problem, how do we solve it? I didn't know anything about it; I'm a social worker by trade. But I like to fish. Having people that could take what we thought, put it into action, and deliver a product that far exceeded what we thought we would have when we started -- and it was so much better."

On Wednesday, June 28, Carwell, Hanson, and a few friends and supporters of Chicago No Limits Fishing met at the Richard J. Daley Park Boat Launch for the boat's test run. Hanson captained and four others rode along. The crew went east up the Chicago River, through the city, and into Lake Michigan before docking at their new slip in DuSable Harbor.

"My first concern was that it was going to go off the back of the trailer and sink into the river," Carwell said, laughing. "When it went off the trailer and just floated exactly like it was supposed to and the motor started up, it was like, 'OK, we're here! We have a program.' It went from this concept, this idea that we

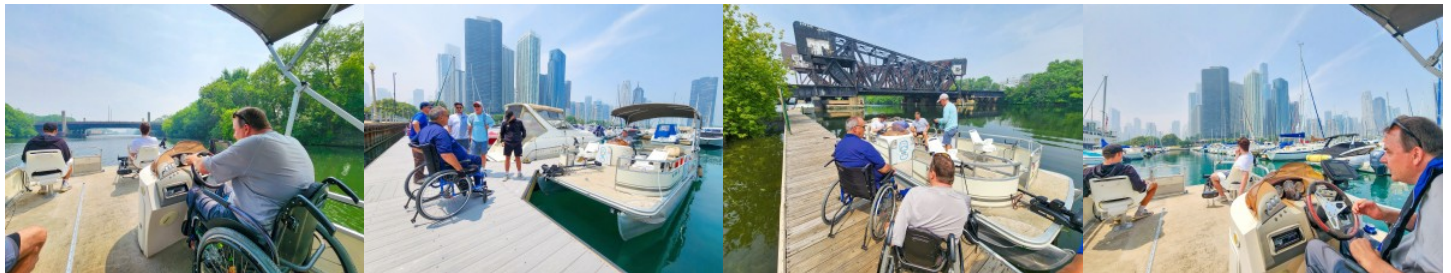
were going to do something, to being real. At no time had it been real before that."

With the space between seats, the wide gate on the boat, and a ramp to bridge the gap between boat and dock, everything is wheelchair accessible. Carwell and Hanson estimate that six people can fit on the boat at one time -- the captain and five passengers.

"From design to implementation to positioning of equipment to structural changes -- all the things that Advantage did that we didn't even think about -- those things made that trip so simple," Carwell said. "When we got down there and got Dave off the boat and back onto the boat again, it was so simple. It far exceeded anything we could have imagined."

About Advantage Trailer: Advantage Trailer is a full-service trailer dealership in Carol Stream, IL. Founded in 1989, Advantage has provided trailer sales, leasing, rentals, service, and parts to customers in the Chicago suburbs for over 30 years. With a specialty in custom trailers, Advantage has a nationwide reach, in addition to local fabrication capabilities.

About Chicago No Limits Fishing: Chicago No Limits Fishing is a program of Chicago Adaptive Sports, a registered 501c(3) nonprofit organization. Founded and operated by individuals with disabilities who have years of experience in boating and fishing, Chicago No Limits Fishing aims to provide recreational fishing opportunities for all individuals regardless of age, race, gender, or disability.



Media Contact

Advantage Trailer

justin@advantagetrailer.com

630-580-5840 ext. 11

110 E. North Ave.

Source : Advantage Trailer

[See on IssueWire](#)