



Q & A

Paying it Forward

These teen brothers aim to pass on their passion for fishing to other kids.

By Alex Suescun

Brothers Vick and William Tan, ages 16 and 14, split their time between Westchester, N.Y., and Eden Prairie, Minn. While neither of their parents nor any close relatives fish, the boys became interested in the sport early in life. When they noticed that not many other kids their age were wetting a line, they pondered what might be keeping youngsters from taking up fishing and endeavored to do something about it.

Deciding that a lack of access to tackle and insufficient basic know-how were the biggest barriers to entry, Vick and William co-founded Fish Hut, a non-profit organization created with the goal of removing said roadblocks to help introduce more kids to fishing and foster greater participation in the sport.

An estimated 80,000 kids have now had the opportunity to fish thanks to the Tan brothers, and in 2025, they were rewarded for their efforts with the Gloria Barron Prize for Young Heroes, presented to outstanding young leaders who make a significant impact on people, their communities, and the environment.

Game & Fish Magazine (G&F): When did you two begin fishing and how did you get started?

Vick Tan (VT): I started when I was in second grade.

William Tan (WT): And I was in kindergarten.

VT: We watched some fishing videos that really made us want to try it. So our parents bought us a little Spiderman rod-and-reel combo at Target that we used to practice casting inside the house. Then we bugged our mom and dad to take us to the water, and they did.

WT: Now we fish practically every weekend during the warmer months, and as often as possible in the winter.

G&F: So what is Fish Hut and how did it come about?

VT: It's a non-profit organization that William and I started, focused on introducing kids to fishing so they'll spend more time outdoors and less glued to cell phones and computer screens. We do that by building these boxes, filling them with fishing tackle that people can borrow for free, and putting them in places where the community will have easy access to them.

WT: We also organize fishing events where people of all ages can participate for free.

G&F: How many Fish Hut boxes have you built, and where have you placed them?

VT: We've built more than 50 already, and have put them in parks near lakes, ponds, or rivers, and at community centers, YMCAs, and libraries in Minnesota, New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut.

WT: And in Alaska. We delivered two Fish Hut boxes to the library in Seward when we went halibut fishing.

G&F: What events have you run so far?

VT: We held our first Largest Free Ice-Fishing Event in Lake Minnetonka in February 2025, and participation was great, so we decided to make it an annual event.

WT: Yes, we have heated ice-fishing huts for participants, as well as experts that provide fishing advice. And anglers can win lots of prizes.

VT: Last year we also partnered with New York City Parks to hold a free fishing clinic in Central Park.

G&F: There's also a mental health aspect to your fishing events, right?

VT: Yes, some speakers came to our school and talked about good mental health and its connection with healthy pastimes. We learned that nearly 70 percent of young people experience mental health challenges, and that got us thinking about ways to get kids to develop a love for the outdoors, interacting with nature and learning valuable skills. When we started planning fishing events, we partnered with JED Foundation, one of the country's largest mental health organizations, to have mental health speakers come to some.

G&F: How are your Fish Hut boxes and events funded?

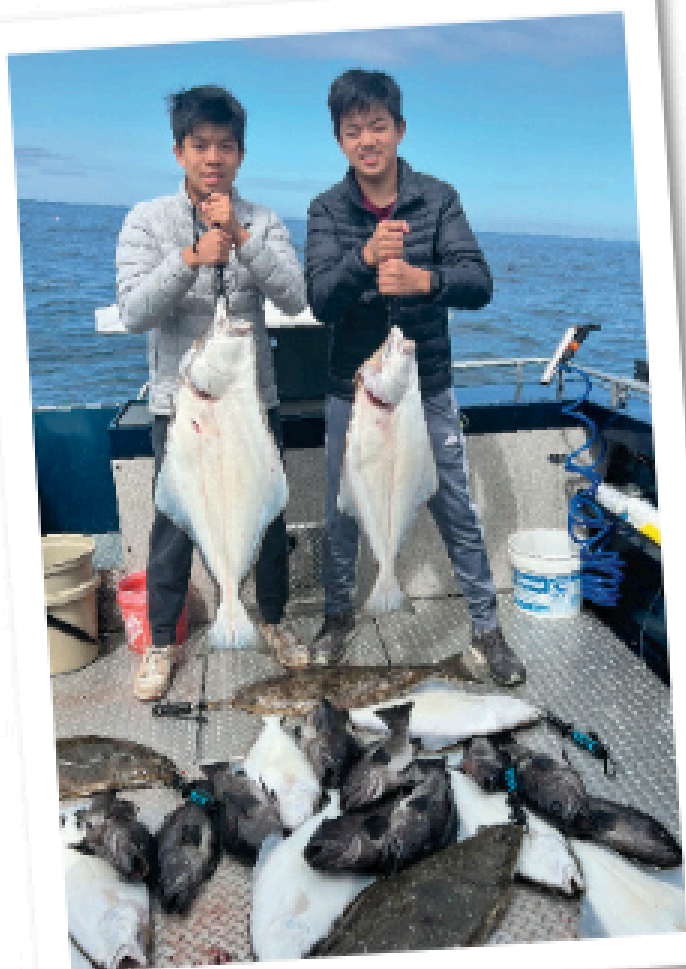
WT: We have sponsors and also receive private donations. We've raised more than \$35,000 so far.

VT: But not all sponsors donate money. For example,

one gave us 50 carbon-fiber, telescopic fishing rods that are perfect for our Fish Hut boxes.

G&F: You two won a major award for your efforts last year, right?

VT: Yes, we received the Gloria Barron Prize, and were among the 15 recipients awarded \$10,000. Some of the money will go toward our fishing events, but most will be spent on more Fish Hut boxes and the tackle.



G&F: What do you have planned for Fish Hut in the near future?

VT: We plan to expand to 10 states and build and place 100 Fish Hut boxes between this year and next. We'll keep having our Largest Free Ice-Fishing Event every February, and want to hold other events in Minnesota, New York, and New Jersey.

WT: We're also going to have a summer fishing festival, and people anywhere can participate in it. They just need to take a photo of their catch and email or text it to us.

G&F: What social media platforms do you use to promote Fish Hut and the events?

VT: Instagram and YouTube. We have about 13,000 followers on IG (@fishhutandcompany), and over 100,000 on our YouTube channel.

G&F: Where can parents who want to get their kids into fishing find out more about Fish Hut and your events? And how can folks who want to get involved or contribute reach you?

VT: People can go to our website, fishhut.org, for information, and they can reach us by email at team@fishhut.org. 

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