Zack Przywieczerski, 13, makes a cast as professional fisherman David Elder of Tuscaloosa watches.

THERAPY

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dreams for children who are terminally ill or disabled.

"With the facilities we have here, not only is it great for the kids but it's a trip for their parents as well," Montgomery said. "We started out with about six or eight kids, and then Bridgi said she had 14 that wanted to come. I was not going to turn anybody down."

Montgomery said he sought help from his neighbors, business associates, tackle manufacturers and other organizations.

"It's been [an] absolute blessing," he said. "We started off meeting with close friends over breakfast. One hour later, we already had the materials donated for a handicapped fishing pier and the help to build it."

Clay Dyer, a professional bass fisherman since 1995, offered to serve as a guide for the children. Dyer has no legs and a partial right arm.

"It's a joy to be able to offer this to these kids," Montgomery said. "Clay Dyer is an inspiration to me. He called me out of the blue and wanted to help. After 10 minutes on the phone, I knew I wanted him to be a part of this."

For selfish reasons on my part, I wanted to meet Clay.

"Every one of the guides said they always wanted to participate in something like this. We had to turn down help and guides because the outpouring has been tremendous."

Pam Montgomery said cash donations will be used to pay for gas so the families can drive home.

"Some of them had to travel two days just to get here," she said.

Like her husband, Pam Montgomery said the response was "overwhelming."

"We had UPS trucks making deliveries in here all week long," she said. "It's amazing how people's hearts opened up for these kids."

"One mother told me she couldn't believe her little boy walked over to get his backpack. She said he usually never leaves her side. He was excited and wanted to be brave, I guess."

The children and their families assembled at the Leavellwood lodge to receive their equipment, including a tube of crickets. The lodge borders a small pond.

"One guy who had never been fishing before caught 10 before the thing even started," Trey Montgomery said.

Przywieczerski boarded a fully equipped bass boat with a couple of pros, David Elder of Tuscaloosa and Matt Leavell of Vicksburg, Miss.

"We'll be putting Zack on big fish, some that will stretch his line," Elder said. "He'll be crying for a massage therapist when he gets through."

"Zack is my buddy already," said Leavell, a Mississippi State student. "You can see these kids have the best attitude. All they want to do is go fishing. Being able to fulfill a dream of theirs, you can't ask for much more."

Brett Williams, Zack's stepfather, said Przywieczerski faces five more months of chemotherapy treatments. He recently finished the seventh grade and plans to attend school at Holtville.

"We do quite a bit of night fishing and catfishing," Williams said. "He really enjoys it."

"It's an experience to see someone going through so much to show compassion and love for others. You see children in so much pain in the hospital, but this is wonderful."

Derek Lawson, 14, came down to fish from Tennessee. Lawson has Fabry's disease and is unable to sweat. He didn't board a boat, but he had made it in the shade at a boathouse.

Using a cricket on his rod and reel, Lawson hooked a small bream. Before he could get it in, a bass attacked. Lawson missed the first one, but he caught two bass using the same technique. His sister, Karen Lewis, caught the action with a video camera.

"It was the first bass I ever caught," Lawson said of the 2-pounder that he landed. "I knew it was done there."

Lewis said Lawson has undergone treatments to replace enzymes his system can't produce.

"I think this is great," Lewis said. "It's an amazing thing, very wonderful. To see him happy, that's worth anything."

Dalton Bobo, a pro bass fisherman who lives in Northport, took Cory Graham, 14, of Cullman out on a boat.

"He told me he wanted to use an open-faced reel for bass," Bobo said. "He's a pretty accomplished bass fisherman. All I'm doing is pinpointing his cast. It's special for me. I'm getting to make a lifelong friend."

Graham's biggest bass was a 3-pounder.

"I enjoy being able to fish," Graham said. "I want to thank all the people that are putting this together."

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