Twenty-four families headed down the Southport Marina dock to go deep sea fishing last Friday morning.

As they headed out in the rain Friday morning, passengers’ and captains’ faces were smiling with anticipation of the fish and the fun they were about to find.

"I can’t even tell you how amazing it was as we were going around and talking to the kids, they were so happy," said USSA founder and CEO Brigid O’Donoghue. "Even if they didn’t catch a fish, they caught a memory and that is what was so great about it."

Off to a bumpy start

"This was our first time, it was awesome," said Robin Rose of Preston Development, Southport Marina’s parent company was on hand that day to see the boats off and welcome them back. He helped establish Miracle League of the Triangle in the Raleigh-Cary-Wake area providing kids with special needs the opportunity to play baseball, and found a way to connect the two nonprofits.

"When this group brought their ideas to us about a place where they could have this function, we were all onboard," he stated. "We were able to have seven slots for Miracle League of the Triangle so those families are here today.

"We have seven slots for Miracle League of the Triangle so those families are here today."

"Even if they didn’t catch a fish, they caught a memory and that is what was so great about it."
USAA takes kids on the water

Continued from page 1B

He has since been declared cancer free. The family, who Coughlin said camps a lot so they do a lot of fishing, “but never deep sea fishing,” heard about the fishing trip through the Kisses for Kyle Foundation, and were one of two fortunate families selected for the trip.

“It was amazing,” Coughlin said. “Seriously, we would never have done anything like this, it was just an amazing experience.”

“I got to drive the boat,” Riley exclaimed, adding that he caught a “really big fish.”

After the event the children and their families gathered for lunch at the marina where law enforcement officers with the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission handed out badges and bracelets and talked to the kids about an alligator that had been spotted in the river. The children also got to meet the Brunswick County Sheriff’s Department’s canine unit therapy dog “Boulder,” whose friendly, easy-going temperament and wagging tail was a source of delight to the kids.

This was the first excursion USAA has held since the suspension of events due to COVID-19 in spring of 2020, and O’Donoghue says she is excited for next year’s trip back to Southport. She hopes to try to shoot for 50 boats.

“We have the captains and we have the families,” she said.

Photos by Morgan Harper

Nine-year-old McKenna Smith waves goodbye to Captain Jim Anderson. McKenna and her mother, Jennifer Kolalowski, spent the morning on Anderson’s Tour H2O pontoon boat with McKenna catching Atlantic croakers.

USAA founder Brigid O’Donoghue, pictured right, greets families and boat captains on their return from their fishing excursions. Before they all head out to sea, she takes group photos and has them developed while they are gone so that when they get back they can have a keepsake group photo of the experience.

Sometimes you don’t catch anything... and other times you catch a King Mackerel like this family did. There were actually two King Mackerels brought in on two separate boats, as well as several Spanish Mackerels and other fish from the sea. Many elected to release their fish so they’d grow to be bigger, while some brought theirs in to be filleted by their captains so they could take them home.

WE’RE THE EXPERTS IN ST. JAMES PLANTATION

2021 Sales

Top Companies — Home and Lot Sales
1/1/21 – 6/30/21 - St. James Plantation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Sides Sold</th>
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<td>Keller Williams</td>
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Source: Based on North Carolina Regional MLS Statistic

Lisa Nieves  |  Lisa Frye  |  Gail Lendvoyi

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