

# STREAM CHAMPION

## Shannon Mayes

Shannon Mayes confesses to three obsessions, a trilogy of activities where he is “all in.” In no particular order, they are: ruffed grouse hunting, fly fishing and educating children.

Mayes fuels two of the three as leader of TU Teens of Gallipolis—an after school fly-fishing club affiliated with the Mad Men Chapter #477 in southern Ohio. The club meets at Gallia Academy Middle School, where Mayes teaches sixth grade language arts.

Founded in 2013, TU Teens of Gallipolis has filled a void for many students who have not excelled at traditional after school pastimes like athletics or academics. And while boasting a diverse



membership, it has managed to attract a number of students with a history of poor attendance, low grades and few extra-curricular activities.

“Many of these kids have discovered an activity that makes them feel included—something that gives them a feeling of self-worth,” says Mayes, who requires members to sign a contract committing to participate in the club for a full year. In return, the students receive goodies like stickers, calendars, a TU annual membership and a t-shirt and hat—a “uniform” they are known to wear during local parades and other community events.

When the club organizes at the beginning of each academic year, Mayes goes over the basics of fly fishing. Through classroom and outdoor activities, students learn how to operate the rod and reel, identify fish species, care for equipment, tie flies and cast a rod. Along the way, they acquire knowledge that might be applied to fishing and life:

- Listen and observe your surroundings.
- Don't crowd others.
- Respect the outdoors.
- Take time to laugh and enjoy the day.

In addition to bestowing important lessons, Mayes has had to wear other hats, including that of fundraiser, a necessary role to ensure the long-term success of the club—especially since his school is located in an economically distressed part of the state.

“I began reaching out to community members and business owners in an effort to generate additional resources and the support and money poured in,” says Mayes. “I have been blown away by how many people appreciate the importance of investing in our youth in this way.”

The support has made it possible for Mayes to expand the club, acquire equipment and take the club on the road—from local ponds in southern Ohio to world-class fly-fishing destinations in West Virginia, Virginia and Tennessee. Generous donations have also made it possible to accompany one club member to the national TU Teen Summit and explore opportunities for sending other members to summer fly-fishing camps where they might meet others who share the same interests.

“While educating youth remains a passion and priority, Shannon goes beyond what is required as a school teacher to provide a place where these kids feel like they belong and opportunities they may not have otherwise had a chance to experience,” says Jamie Eggers, a volunteer who helps with fundraising, tying flies and chaperoning trips. “He takes an interest not only in their education, but in their well-being, by introducing them to a passion they can carry with them the rest of their lives.”

Now, four years in, the TU Teens of Gallipolis has grown to more than 50 members comprising fly-fishing clubs from two school districts. Mayes meets with each group once a week for an hour during the academic year. He is also involved with replicating his work in other parts of Ohio, Washington D.C., Chicago, Montana and Kentucky.

However, while the club's increasing membership and financial support is impressive, they pale in comparison to another measure of success—an ever-growing collection of “fish stories” shared by older students and newly mined club veterans. With every fishing trip, the library grows.

“When I started this club, I had no idea of what it would become—from the enthusiasm of the kids to the outpouring from the community,” adds Mayes. “Organizing weekly gatherings, interacting with parents, raising money, planning trips and consulting on similar efforts around the country makes it a part-time job—one I wouldn't trade for the world.”

**Favorite Fly:**  
Yellow soft hackle.

**Favorite Place to Fish:**  
Chattooga River in South Carolina.

**Most Memorable Fish:**  
A 22-inch rainbow caught on the Madison River in Montana (that required a guide to get out of the boat, wade to middle of river and free a line wedged under a rock).



## Annual Outing of the Little Elkhart Chapter INDIANA

In-stream demonstrations of five trout fly-fishing techniques captivated attendees at the 10th anniversary Annual Spring Outing of the Little Elkhart Chapter of TU in Middlebury, Ind., on May 7, 2016. These “Trout 101” clinics evolved due to requests by local anglers who were struggling to understand the unique anatomy of the Little Elkhart River with its woody debris trout cover, sandy bottom and short deep under-log pockets.

Brandon Rasler demonstrated and described nymph fishing in undercut banks, deep holes and fast runs. Andy Kitson pointed out the excitement associated with using dry flies as well as the areas of the river that allow this technique to be successful. He also explained where and how to fish terrestrials at certain times of the year. Leonard Gustin noted the classical methods to fish soft hackle flies as well as how to use them in place of dry flies. Chris Miller emphasized the importance of casting streamer flies close to cover as well as along current breaks. Mike Beachy described techniques used to fish log-jams, brush piles and wing dams. He emphasized that the fly pattern is not as critical as is the weight and density of the fly in this type of fishing.

Each clinic session started with a description of a tactic or technique and then moved to the instructor presenting an in-stream demonstration. All instructors covered what type of water to look for, best time of year to use the technique, suggested equipment and leader set up and the all-important arsenal of flies to use.

Aquatic biologist Daragh Deegan followed the in-stream presentations with a demonstration of stream shocking to show and discuss information about the various species captured. In addition, he discussed how each relates to the ecology of the Little Elkhart River.

President Mike Beachy described the stream habitat improvements that have taken place during the past 10 years. He pointed out that local TU members took a fairly barren small stream and turned it into the vibrant stream of today that supports reproducing brown trout. Beachy also noted how the local chapter obtained permission from the state DNR to establish a two-mile stretch that is catch and release only. All the efforts to both develop and improve the Little Elkhart River have been funded by the local TU chapter.

Throughout the day, casting instruction was available to anyone attending by Charlie Ray, our local TU casting instructor. Tim Pote was on hand to demonstrate fly tying and to discuss the favorite flies of local experts. Bill and Penny Myers served a cookout style lunch followed by the fundraising portion in the afternoon.

## Got Big News from Your Chapter? We want to hear about it.

The Actionline section of TROUT provides a perfect forum for exchanging information and sharing successes. Do you remember your first TU project? The first TU member who reached out and connected fishing to conservation? How did you come to TU? Let us know. Email Samantha Carmichael at [scarmichael@tu.org](mailto:scarmichael@tu.org) with a short tale of 200 words or less. Photos are welcome (digital images are preferred).