

Clinton Township teacher designs Simms shirt art



STOCKTON REDFISH SS T



Ottawa Elementary School teacher Matthew Stockton designed T-shirt artwork for fishing company Simms. Photo courtesy of MATTHEW STOCKTON

By Nicole Tuttle , For The Macomb Daily
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Matthew Stockton, a fishing enthusiast, sold a T-shirt design to fishing company Sim Photo courtesy of MATTHEW STOCKTON

Combining two of his greatest passions — art and fishing — has proven to be more than a pipe dream for Ottawa Elementary School teacher Matthew Stockton.

Stockton recently had one of his artistic designs accepted by fishing company Simms for a T-shirt.

“As a kid growing up I had my two passions, art and fishing, as my safety net. So working through that and in telling people that is going to be your goal; people break into a chuckle like, ‘Yeah.’ And then finally noticing it happen through hard work and dedication makes me feel humble and very excited and speechless at times,” Stockton said.

Stockton, a Berkley resident, attended Western Michigan University, graduating with a bachelor's in teaching focusing on art in 2007. He worked in long term substitute teaching until 2010, when he became a teacher in the Chippewa Valley School District at Ottawa Elementary in Clinton Township. In addition to teaching art, he has participated in art shows focusing on his fishing passion, traveling throughout Michigan to show his fishing-related art.

"I've been interested in fishing since I was a little boy. I loved the time spent with by grandpa and my dad going on fun fishing trips," Stockton said.

Fly fishing tops his list, and Stockton said he spends a lot of time seeking Michigan species, particularly up north or in Lake St. Clair. He goes fishing "every possible minute that I can, weekends, whenever I can get away."

"I like to use the time to explore new water and fishing holes," Stockton said.

Channeling this passion for fishing into his other passion, art, led him to post some of his fishing creations on Instagram. This caught the attention of Simms about a year ago, Stockton said. They sent a list of fish species that tend to sell best in their clothing line, according to Stockton.

"They had seen my Instagram and were interested in seeing an art portfolio of some specific kinds of fish. They sent a list of what they wanted to see. I submitted whatever I had to them and they went through the process of pursuing with this artist or not," Stockton said. "So after the email was the most intense waiting, weeks and weeks of 'Do they like it?'"

Although he cannot disclose the terms of the agreement with Simms, Stockton said that after the long wait he was at last informed that a T-shirt featuring one of his fish designs would be released for the 2017 line with Simms. The shirt features a markers and ink creation of a redfish, and sells online at simmsfishing.com for \$29.95 now.

"I had to wait until that shirt was released to voice it to other people," Stockton said.

The redfish depicted is more likely to be found in Louisiana than Michigan, but it is considered to be a top catch on the bucket list of many anglers and fly fishermen, according to Stockton.

"It's one fish I have never caught in my life and now I am obligated to catch it," Stockton said.