

It's a week old news already, but our 5th Annual "Special Hunt for Hunter's with Disabilities" was a great success. During the week of October 4 - 12, 2003, forty-nine Clark County landowners and thirty some helpful guides created lasting memories for thirty-nine disabled deer hunters. Thanks to the dedicated help of numerous guides and assistant's, the participants ended the week with 43 deer; 6 Buck, 27 Doe and 10 Yearlings from 5,100 acres of privately enrolled property. With the availability of Unit 58 Bonus Tags, twenty-seven of the 39 hunter's harvested deer, six of whom got triples and four got doubles. The hunt also had it's misfortunes, as all hunts do. Twelve of the thirty-nine hunters returned home with empty tags. But not from lack of effort on their parts. Eight missed shots and two hit deer that couldn't be found with the Saturday evening rain. Though in percentage of fulfillment and joy, the hunt was 110% successful.

For many of the hunter's the size and shape of deer didn't matter. They were satisfied enough by the opportunity to enjoy Mother Nature and to be part of a "camp". For most, this event would be their only chance to go hunting this year. In it's fifth year, this hunt is no longer about shooting deer - It's about the friendship and camaraderie spirited by willing sportspersons wanting to help those that need it! When asked how big this hunt can get, I responded by saying - "As big as the hearts of these guides, landowners and sponsors". What started out in 1999 as a simple suggestion, to a group of 12 neighboring landowners with 1,370 acres, as a way to help reduce the expanding herd of whitetail deer, has since turned into an immense community effort to enable fellow disadvantage sportsmen enjoy the great outdoors. Each year there are a handful of new hunters arriving with new challenges and familiar apprehensions. By the time they leave they are counting down the days until next year with new hopes, a rekindled spirit and full of self esteem. The simple task of walking into a woods or climbing a tree is taken for granted, until you find yourself blind or confined to a wheelchair or required to use crutches for mobility.

The hunter's disabilities ranged from high-level paralysis to amputee to blind. Blind since birth, new hunter Brent Harding of Algoma, wasn't sure if he would be able to enjoy a sport that most Wisconsinites take for granted. With the caring aide of his father Burt and the relentless help of guides Kendal Durham and Kevin Oldham, Brent managed to harvest a yearling on October 5th and returned to harvest a nice 10 point buck on the last evening of the hunt on land enrolled by Joe Trybula of Willard. (See picture below)



To see the smiles and feel the exhilaration of participants like Brent and his father is enough reward for the guides and landowners to take time out of their hectic fall schedule and personal hunting aspirations to enable these, sometimes total strangers, to enjoy the great outdoors.

You can view pictures of this year's hunt and many new photos of the resort on its website at www.sunsetpinesresort.com

TAKE CARE until next time and have a great fall!

Have a Great Day ;)
Dale R. Petkovsek