

Children Forget Illnesses Through Summer Fun

July 22, 2008



It turned out to be a near perfect weather weekend for the 5th annual Outdoor Water Sports event held in Central Wisconsin for children and their families that are enduring serious illnesses. The tents went up and the campers rolled in as the 2008 summer splash got underway. Swimming, water skiing, jet skis, tubing, camping and fishing are the main activities for hundreds of kids and their families that have come from places around the country to enjoy 3 days in this one of a kind summer retreat. Many of the children and people that come to this event have taken part in the special hunting and outdoor wishes granted by the United Special Sportsman Alliance (USSA). In conjunction with the various water sports, there is archery, rifle shooting, horseback riding, games, a variety of special music and a multitude of other activities for the families who come to let go and just simply have fun. There is even a hunter safety course given by Hunter Safety Instructor Adam

Bernarde during the event, and there is always something going on for everyone.

The funding for the event is a major effort provided by numerous local, regional and national sponsors including support from Mill Creek Education & Gun Club, Freedom Church, Conveyor Technology, The Draght Family, and the Brett Favre Foundation. The food, the tents, all the equipment and the recipe for smiles and laughter are provided at no cost to the families who venture to the otherwise quiet 1200 acre Wisconsin cranberry marsh. "It goes from placid to pandemonium overnight", explains Troy Jens, a veteran professional bass fishing guide and outdoor writer who travels the long distance from his home in Alabama each year to assist with the event. Joining him this year were other pro anglers Perry Powell, from Texas, Brent Long, from North Carolina, Denny Halgren from IL, and Carl Roberts from Missouri. "The long drive and price of gas don't matter to us when it comes to this" said Jens. "It's a long trip made very short by the incredible moments we know that we get to share each year with these beautiful kids and their families, just one of those many smiles makes it worth every hour on the road and every penny in the tank".

Brigid O'Donoghue, the founder of the USSA has dedicated her life to the mission of providing wish trips in the outdoors to kids and their families suffering from critical illnesses and disabilities for the past 8 years. "It's all about them and it's all for them", explains O'Donoghue. "Each year at this event we see familiar faces, we see new faces and we carry the memories of those that are gone but never forgotten, we are all

family". Some families that have lost a child or loved one to cancer or other disease continue to attend the annual event each summer. "Unlike many agencies and organizations, the USSA is all about forming life-long attachments, we always want to be here for them and we love them all", said O'Donoghue.

The annual USSA summer splash provides a lot more than just a good time, it allows the opportunity for healing through sharing, and hope beyond the hardships that families immersed in the anxiety of serious illnesses undergo. With the continued annual growth, the USSA Summer Water Sports event has become a sort of an open "family reunion" for so many people. It's a time to be relaxed and a time to be renewed. As many have explained, it's just too hard to describe it all, you simply would have to experience it to really know what it's all about.

For information on how you can help or become involved with the special mission of the USSA, visit

www.childswish.com