KIDS HUNTS

Hunting and fishing trips for disabled and terminally ill children

The United Special Sportsmen Alliance (USSA), a nonprofit organization, coordinates hunting and fishing trips for disabled and terminally ill children. Two of the 2003 bear-hunt participants are in wheelchairs; one is recovering from a lung transplant. The trips have all been at little or no cost to the participant, and a parent, family member, guardian, or caretaker is encouraged to participate with the child.

All the hunting and fishing trips are donated by independent landowners, game ranchers, large and small guide outfitters, and caring individuals. Current major sponsors include Northland Cranberries, the Safari Clubs of Kansas-Minnesota-Missouri, Buckmasters, and Bass Pro Shops. Past hunts have included bear, hog, turkey, deer, elk, and bison. The USSA continues to receive donated trips and is striving to match them up to special children as quickly as possible.

The USSA needs referrals of terminally ill or disabled children interested in hunting or fishing trips. Persons interested in donating fishing trips, hunting trips, raising funds, or in referring children who would like a trip should contact Brigid O'Donoghue at (800) 518-8019, or log on to the USSA Web site at deerfood.com.

SAVING LIVES

Personal Locator Beacons

The Federal Communication Committee has now made Personal Locator Beacons (PLBs) legal for usage in the continental United States. Personal Locator Beacons technology has been in usage for years by pilots and sailors, and this satellite-assisted search-and-rescue technology has saved thousands of lives around the world. The beacons are designed for life-threatening emergencies and serve to issue a call for help via a reliable and time-tested system.

On 1 July 2003, the day the FCC authorized the use and sale of PLBs in the United States, U.S. Search and Rescue agencies in Waterbury, Vermont, conducted a missing-person search and rescue in a densely wooded area. Local Boy Scout Troops 42 and 759 participated in the test and the ceremonial first activation. Vermont Boy Scout Troops 42 and 759 turned on a GyPSI Beacon from ACR Electronics of Ft. Lauderdale, Florida, and then joined the Vermont State Patrol, Civil Air Patrol, the U.S. Air Force, and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) in a full-fledged test of the system.

Using the three-step activation process, which eliminates accidental activation, Vermont Governor Jim Douglas set off a beacon notifying authorities that a scout was in distress. The beacon emitted a 406-megahertz signal to Cosmas-Sarsat, an international, humanitarian satellite-based search and rescue system. Within minutes the signal was relayed and picked up by the AFRCC in Virginia.

Immediately upon receipt of the signal, the people at the AFRCC's Watch Center compiled and sorted the information they had, assessed it, and notified Vermont's search and rescue coordinator, Lt. Don Patch of the Vermont State Police, about the mission. Vermont's Civil Air Patrol then scoured the ground from the sky as the police dispatched a ground crew to search for the scout. The police remaining in the mobile SAR vehicle utilized the SARMaster information system, a database and software platform that provided real-time data feeds and maps of the area, and the information led the ground party to the Scout in distress.

The program will be implemented across the U.S. and in nine national parks in approximately five years. Oregon and Washington will receive this new technology in 2003. Built to strict FCC requirements, PLBs are compact, weigh about a pound, and will retail for approximately $700.

Ryan Carlson and his father proudly pose with Ryan's 10-point, 188½-score deer. Ryan was the recipient of a heart transplant in November 2002.