15-Year-Old Hits Jackpot on First Hunt
by Dale Bruder, Lake Superior Chapter President

The Lake Superior Chapter of SCI and Brigid O’Donoghue of United Special Sportsman Alliance “Dream Wish Foundation” joined forces and helped Aaron Fogleson, a handicapped youth from Black River Falls, WI achieve his “dream of a lifetime” hunt. The 15-year-old youth hunter had the type of hunt and the end result that hunters many times his age have only dreamed about. He bagged a 493# Wisconsin black bear on the first big game hunt of his life.

Once again, we called upon lifelong Minong residents Jack Link and Steve Waggoner with their experienced dog packs. With 90 combined years of bear/dog hunting between them, we were confident we could fulfill Aaron’s wish.

The morning was made to order for a successful hunt. The sky was clear, the ground still damp from two previous days of rain. There was hardly any wind and the fog drifted upward off the ponds scattered throughout the area. The pungent odor of the air that only an autumn morning brings was intoxicating to both the hunters and the dogs. The four dogs were turned out on a “hit” bait and took off barking. After about 20 minutes, three of the dogs returned and seemed to have lost the scent. The tracking collar on the fourth dog showed that she was still moving due south, so we headed in that direction to find her. She is a seasoned veteran and doesn’t give up on a scent as easily as the younger dogs do. As we approached the approximate location the scanner showed her to be, the dogs “rigged” from the dog-box. We stopped and turned them loose again. They took off in a noisy rush and in just minutes, were barking “treed”. Jeremy “Rodeo” Gilbert, a chapter member, and Aaron grabbed the rifle and took off to find the dogs.

When they reached the tumultuous scene, the bear was on the ground with his rump against a large pine tree. He was sparring with the dogs and was not intending to climb the tree to escape. If you have ever walked into a hunting scene like this, the confusion and noise is enough to shake up an experienced hunter. Aaron remained calm and followed Rodeo’s instructions to wait for a safe and clear shot. At the appearance of humans, the bear turned and started ambling away with the dogs in close pursuit. The hunters followed, trying to get a clear and killing shot, always aware of the dogs’ exact positions. After 20 minutes or so, that opportunity presented itself. The bear had again backed up against a tree and two dogs were lying on the ground, beat up by the bear’s powerful paws with razorlike claws. The other two dogs were keeping their distance, but continued to hold the bear at bay. Rodeo positioned Aaron for a shot to dispatch the bear quickly and humanely. A few seconds later it was over.

We found an old rut road and drove the vehicles into the woods within 100 feet of the bear. It took all of our combined effort to load the bear into the truck. Aaron, with the help of some dedicated volunteers, had successfully fulfilled his “dream” hunt. A big “thank you” to all of the volunteers involved.

![Bear hunting scene](image_url)