3rd Annual Sahara Woods Trek

2005 was our third year of having the pleasure of helping out with granting the dreams of a group of terminally ill or extremely disabled children with United Special Sportsmen Alliance. Brigid O’Donoghue and her organization continue to bring kids and adults on outdoors experiences that now have grown to over 3000 individuals! IBS has worked with the DNR to bring over 36 kids their deer hunting dreams with these fair chase hunts on the Sahara Woods site, just north of Shawnee National Forest in southern Illinois.

To date, our Dream Hunt kids have come from 16 different states and have ranged in ages from last year’s youngest 7 year old to young adults. With all good things, so come changes and we were glad to see that this year’s enthusiasm and fine effort of the Illinois DNR and local Carrier Mills community welcomed those changes with open arms.

Our Hunters

In 2005, our Special Sportsmen, and one 10-year-old Knoxville Tennessee Sports lady, Ashley Manes came from 9 different states. Our youngest hunter was 7 yr old Byron Gunn and his 9 yr old brother, Alex, from Marshfield, Wisconsin. The rest of our hunting camp included: 9 yr old Tanner Connell, from Tifton, Georgia, two 13 yr olds; Alex Meadows from Weaverville, North Carolina and Adam Ducat from Two Rivers, Wisconsin, 14 yr old Ryan Phillips from Valmeyer Illinois, 15 yr old Shane O’Donoghue from Lake Zurich, Illinois and two 16 yr olds; Cory Gram from Vinemont, Alabama and Erik Peterson from Muskegon, Michigan, 17 yr old Kyle David Tomlinson from Harviell, Missouri, 18 yr old Wesley Johnson from Spencer Wisconsin and 20 yr old young man Anthony Frye from Barboursville, West Virginia.

Our Hunters’ Helpers

We welcomed back several of our veteran helpers of the last two year’s hunts and want to thank them for their efforts on this project. Ron McCarthy (Virginia, IL), Damian Considine (Dixon), Terry Day (Franklin Grove), Clyde Seely (Amboy), Gerry Grimm (Dixon), Scott Woodcock (Murrayville), and Dave Charles (Carbondale), and myself (Rockford). Joining us this year was Mark Kerhlikar (Modesto), Diane Colandra (Lake Zurich), Steve Hakes (Winnebago) and we had two out of staters; Lee MacDonald from Pittsville, Wisconsin and our first return Special Sportsman to help out, Erik Corey from Knox, Indiana. We had help from many family members in pitching in and quartering deer that was required in the warm days of the hunt.

The Hunt

Eric McClusky, Nick Dolce, Jason Organ, Gary Simpson, John Williamson, and other fine DNR people worked hard before the hunt. We had a very special surprise when we arrived at the Community Building on the Thursday night gathering of hunters. John Williamson had made arrangements with his local scout troop to help us serve food and clean up for our 1st night’s hunting camp. They also led us in the Pledge of Allegiance to kick off this year’s hunt. Thanks to the help of these fine people, we collected 12 deer in the two & ½ days’ fair chase
hunt. Not every child shot a deer but in the true deer camp tradition, everyone had the opportunity and was able to bring some venison home. Not only the hunters but Brigid bringing a couple hundred pounds of frozen venison (donated by Mike Clark) along with her from Wisconsin to share with the whole camp!

THANKS

Whenever you pick some people out to thank, you miss others and I want to thank all the people that contributed to the kids’ food and accommodations. A special thanks goes out to Carol Corey of Knox, Indiana for coordinating the food and gathering at the Carrier Mills Community Building. Our volunteer support team led by Brigid, Brenda McCarthy, with all the mothers, fathers, and siblings that traveled along to enjoy this outing. This year saw more of the families bringing their special treats and dishes and it certainly was welcomed. Two Rockford area contributors came from the camaraderie involved in another hunt for the disabled in Rock Cut State Park; John Eschen donated snacks and other staples to the hunt and Joy Findley of Swiss Colony donated hams and cheeses in remembrance of one of our recently departed Rock Cut helpers, Carl Findley.

Monetary gifts from Illinois Federation for Outdoor Resources, Safari Club International, Whitetails Unlimited and the village of Carrier Mills for the use of their Community Building for three days.

Providing clothes, hats, hand warmers, ice, and food donations were Harrisburg groups like Strictly Outdoors, Pizza Hut, Papa Johns, Mark Simpson and Maier’s Tidy Bowl of Stonetown. Rockford’s Tri-Part Screw Company built & donated a deer dressing tri-pod.

I want to give a special thanks to Brigid for all the compassion, patience and love she shares with the kids and families of her Special Sportsmen and her trust in us to be some small part in this project we affectionately call the Illinois Dream Hunt.

Jim McFarlane
Region 1 Director Illinois Bowhunter Society

2006 Illinois Dream Hunt
WHERE: Sahara Woods State Park, Carrier Mills, IL (just north of Shawnee National Forest)
WHEN: Thursday evening (October 26, 2006) 6:00 pm to 8:00 pm get to know the hunters meeting at Carrier Mills Municipal Building,
Hunt legal hunting hours from Friday am to Sunday noon (October 27-29)
We could use both financial help to offset the kids’ travel expenses and lodging and also some volunteer help with food, guiding, field dressing, butchering, etc.
Contact Jim McFarlane at jem6@prodigy.net or phone 815-964-2019