Young hunters realizing dreams

BY BRIAN DENEAU, STAFF WRITER

"You don't have to wait for a buck. You can hold out and wait for a buck if you want, but I have 50 permits in the envelope and there are 12 of you," Eric Mcclusky, site superintendent of Sahara Woods, told a group of youth and their families Thursday.

"If you want to shoot a doe, if you want to shoot the first thing that goes by, it's your hunt. You do what you want to do."

The group that gathered at Carrier Mills Municipal Building were participating in the United Special Sportsmen Alliance. Many of the kids there were in wheelchairs and all suffer a disability.

For the past five years the USSA, represented by President and Founder Bridget O'Donoghue, has brought the young people to the Sahara Woods property to fulfill a wish of bagging a deer.

The program helps to thin the herd on the property where public hunting is not yet permitted and helps boost the spirits of disabled youth.

"We will do our very best to get everybody a kill," Mcclusky said.

Each young hunter tags along with a guide. The guide calls the shots.

One of the kids, Blake Hall of Forest, has bone cancer. He is confident he will get a deer this weekend.

"(I expect to) see a lot of deer and hopefully get one. I've gone out hunting with my dad since I was 2 and started hunting at 9," Hall said.

His advice?

"You've got to be quiet and patient," Hall said.

His guide, Terry Day of Bloomingtown, is confident in the team's success.

Keith Russell and his father, Steve, of Lebanon, Mo., have a few trophies already. They are looking forward to the opportunities at Sahara Woods.