Bone cancer doesn’t stop Kudrna

by John Groth
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Jordan Kudrna didn’t believe he could have cancer - not at the age of 14.

Two years ago, Kudrna, who’s from Hixton, was diagnosed with Ewing’s Sarcoma, a bone cancer which was located in his back and sacrum. During that summer, his right leg started to hurt. So, he went to the doctor to find out what was wrong. After a few more visits - what Jordan originally thought was a sprain turned out to be a tumor.

During that same period, Jordan’s aunt met Brigid O’Donoghue. She had wanted to get something in the local newspaper about her nephew. O’Donoghue noticed and ended up calling Kudrna.

This past January she received the Outdoor Youth Mentor award.

Seventy-five children attended the USSA and Safari Club International (SCI) event Saturday in Black River Falls. And most had met or been helped by O’Donoghue in some way or another.

Kudrna has already gone on two deer hunts, two turkey hunts, an elk hunt and a bear hunt. But he says he’s liked all of them the same. His whole family hunts and that’s how he first became interested in it. His first hunt ended up being the elk hunt - an animal he had never hunted before.

“I was excited to go hunting for elk,” he said. “We’ve traveled many miles with Brigid and it was fun.”

Kudrna’s met many new friends - young and old - too. He’s met Cory Graham, a 19-year-old from Kansas. He’s met Bridget’s son, Kenny. He’s met Eric Corey, a 19-year-old from Knox, Ind. He’s even met NASCAR driver Ward Burton and hunted with him.

“Brigid took us out to Virginia and we went out on Burton’s preserve and went hunting,” Kudrna said. “I liked driving out there, seeing the land and staying a few days with them.”

James Lakeman, who is the chairman of the board of the USSA, added that these events change children - giving them confidence that they’ve never had before.

“They (parents) see a big change in their children. A lot of times they’ll see them moping around the house or sleeping all the time. And I think one of things that it is the adrenaline. For them, they never experience adrenaline,” Lakeman said. "So what happens is, I think that adrenaline gets in their body and all of a sudden they go 'this is what life is supposed to be about.' When they come back from one of these trips or one of these events, they're so keyed up that a lot times they forget about what's going on in their lives.”

Last July, doctors told Kudrina the cancer had gone into remission.

“If I wasn’t out in the woods with them, I would probably just be sitting at my house,” Kudrna said.

A few minutes later, Kudrina was already back to hanging out with people and swimming in the lake. And anyone who happened to watch him wouldn’t believe that two years ago, he was dealing with bone cancer. Whenever he goes to these events, he always enjoys them.

“I look forward to having fun, swimming, fishing, meeting new people, just having a good time,” he said.