Junction City USSA holds turkey hunt

By GENE KEMMETER
of The Gazette

The Junction City branch of the United Special Sportsman Alliance (USSA) entertained its first two children Saturday, March 31, and Sunday, April 1, taking them on a turkey hunt in the town of Carson.

The program takes seriously ill and disabled children on hunting and fishing trips like Child’s Wish does for other programs, said John Haydock of Junction City, who is involved in the program.

The USSA was founded by Brigid O’Donohue in Pittsville in 2000 and has granted 3,800 hunting and fishing trips for children at no cost to their families.

The children, Brittany Zebra, 11, Hartland, and Alex Olson, 15, Owen, started their hunt early Saturday, then took a break before going back out several hours later on Saturday and then again Sunday morning.

They were out in the area of The Pumpkin Patch, property owned by Larry Trelka that Trelka called “a community thing.” “It’s like you build it and they will come,” he said.

He and students from Kennedy Elementary School in Junction City plant about six acres of pumpkins in the spring and then invite others at the school and other schools to come out in the fall to harvest their own pumpkins.

Brittany said she saw two large toms early, but then nothing in her first hours in a blind. She shot her tom, a 24-pounder with a 10-1/4-inch beard, about 5 p.m. Saturday.

She’s a veteran of the program, having participated in events for several years. When she was 5 she was diagnosed with a brain tumor and has had 16 surgeries, chemotherapy twice and radiation once.

“My dad had a lot of surgeries from accidents and that, but I’ve had more,” she said, explaining that her family gave her a trophy for undergoing chemotherapy for two years. “That thing is so cool,” she said, “it has an angel holding up something, I can’t think what now.”

The trophy is three or three-and-a-half feet tall, she said, and had her favorite colors on it.

“Brittany is three or three-and-a-half feet tall,” she said, “I took her in the backpack and took a little ride.”

Brittany Zebra, 11, Hartland, stands outside a blind in the town of Carson while on a turkey hunt with members of the Junction City branch of the United Special Sportsman Alliance (USSA) on Saturday, March 31. She shot a turkey later in the day. (Portage County Gazette photo)

A Alex Olson, 15, Owen, sits on an all-terrain vehicle in front of a blind in the town of Carson on Saturday, March 31, while on a turkey hunt with members of the Junction City branch of the United Special Sportsman Alliance (USSA). Alex shot a turkey on Sunday, April 1. (Portage County Gazette photo)

“Trelka is three or three-and-a-half feet tall,” she said, “I took her in the backpack and took a little ride.”

Brittany said she wants to go to college and be a singer. “I’m going to help Brigid (O’Donoghue) with hunts for kids,” she said.