Kentucky girl bags bear on ‘dream hunt’

BY JONATHAN GNIESER
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Lee McDonald of Pittsville was among a group of about 30 hunters from Pittsville, Neillsville, Marshfield and Collettsville, N.C., who volunteered to help Samantha hunt for bears in the Chequamegon National Forest.

After arriving at the hunting cabin near Fifield where they stayed on Sept. 12, Samantha rode along with a group of bear hunters to check bear bait piles, McDonald said.

While checking the bait on Sept. 12, McDonald said the group found a pile that has been disturbed by a bear. Samantha and the hunters chased one bear for about six hours before it finally outran the dogs, McDonald said.

Early Sept. 13, the hunters

Samantha Baber poses with her parents, David and Theresa, along with a black bear that Samantha shot and killed.

Bear: Group realizes dying girl’s dream

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found another disturbed bait site and started the chase. Eventually another hunting party called Samantha’s group to report they had chased a bear up into a tree.

The bear climbed in and out of four trees before the hunting dogs managed to catch the bear on the ground, McDonald said.

Then McDonald carried Samantha within 20 yards of the bear so she could pull the trigger.

“After she got to shoot the bear, the smile on her face was priceless,” he said.

“I couldn’t believe how nice everyone was and what they did,” said David, Samantha’s father. “We were all real proud of her.”

Samantha has always loved the outdoors, David said.

“She loves deer hunting, turkey hunting and fishing,” he said.

“This is the first time she’s been bear hunting. She really loved it.”

At first Samantha wanted a rug made out of her bear, but after the hunters took up a collection and a Fifield taxidermist donated his time, McDonald said he’ll be able to deliver the bear to her home fully mounted.

O’Donoghue said she met Samantha after her successful hunt.

“I could tell she was really happy,” she said. “That’s what we want to see — the joy in their face like that. It’s worth a million bucks.”

The USSA also needs more bear hunters to donate their time. For more information about the organization, visit www.chi-swish.com

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