Lyles takes the trip — and the hunt — of a lifetime

By Jerriod Grizzle

On the weekend of Oct. 25-28, Brian Lyles got not one, but two bucks in Ohio. For Lyles, this was a dream come true, something he described as a once in a lifetime opportunity.

In Oct. 2005, Brian, now 25, was diagnosed, with a form of brain cancer called Medulloblastoma. Usually found only in children, Lyles’ case is rare for his age. He underwent brain surgery, radiation and chemotherapy. He finished treatment in September of 2006. The effects of the treatments left him in a wheelchair because of balance and strength problems, as well as damage to his eyesight.

"He went from 300 pounds to 170 pounds," said his uncle Gene Morris.

Morris knew Lyles’ passion for hunting and decided to do something unbelievable in Lyles’ eyes.

"I used to take Brian hunting all the time, from the time he was 4 years old," Morris said. "He’s like a son to me. I contacted United Special Sportsman Alliance and through them I was able to give Brian the hunt of a lifetime."

The U.S.S.A., who’s motto is "Dream Hunt," provides hunters, who would otherwise not be able to go out and experience the outdoors.

"I talked with Brian and he told me that he wanted the biggest deer he could get," said Bridget O’Donoghue, president and founder of U.S.S.A. "It was a pleasure to grant his wish and I don’t think he thought it would be granted as soon as it was but that case, like so many others, touched my heart."

O’Donoghue said she grants about 4,200 such wishes a year. "Everything was paid for," she added.

The trip was arranged by O’Donoghue and U.S.S.A and sponsored by Dakota Outfitters, an all-inclusive Fairview, Ohio refuge that serves the public at large. Lyles traveled with Morris to spend the weekend and hopefully get a buck.

The local Ducks Unlimited chapter also raised funds to purchase camouflage outerwear for Lyles’ hunt.

"Anyone is welcome, we bring the hunters in and accommodate them the best we can," said Eric Stone Spheer, an official with the Ohio outdoors company. "We did this in Brian’s case and it worked wonderfully. We had a great time with great people."

Over a three-day hunt, Lyles was able to take two deer.

"We went hunting Friday morning and didn’t see anything," said Lyles. "We went again at 2 p.m. and still didn’t see anything. They let me shoot a management deer and then I shot a trophy buck that must have been 16-17 points."

Management deer are usually protected regular hunters to control the deer population of the farm and the surrounding area.

"We stayed after the hunt and we flew back on Sunday," he said.

At Lyles’ request, Dakota Outfitters shipped both of his deer back home to Woods ‘N Water Taxidermy for mounting.

Lyles has partially recovered where he can walk with help and has learned to drive with his wheelchair on the back of his truck. Nevertheless, his last MRI in July revealed discouraging news. Brian was diagnosed with three more brain tumors.

"The doctors said I couldn’t go through surgery again. My body wouldn’t be able to handle it," said Lyles.

Since that diagnosis, Lyles has taken on oral chemotherapy called VP-16. Oral VP-16 is one of the mildest chemotherapeutics available at this time. The side effects are minimal and it provides the patient with a high quality of life.

Lyles was called by his doctors on Nov. 1 and was told that since his last MRI in July, his tumor had reduced in size significantly.

To find out more about Lyle’s story and updates on his progress visit http://www.caringbridge.org/cb/viewHome.do.