ALL SMILES—USSA President and founder Brigid O’Donoghue (center) poses with Justin Jackson (left) and Cory Smith following Smith’s successful hunt. The trio was in Brady shortly after Christmas on a hunt that was part of the USSA program.

Dreams—Continued from page one

raper, cued up the tape and plugged the camera into the television. The evening’s hunt was filmed and will eventually be broadcast on Texas Trophy Hunters television show.

As the tape played, Jackson relived his experience and commented on the excitement he felt as he harvested his first whitetail deer.

“'When I saw that buck come in, I couldn’t hardly stand it,'” he said. “'When I shot and I saw it go down, I started bawling. I was so excited, I couldn’t believe it. It was awesome.'”

After the tape had played, it was a quick call on the cell phone to his grandfather to give him the good news.

“Justin’s grandfather was the one who got him in touch with us,” said O’Donoghue. “He is going to be so excited to see the trophy Justin is going to bring home.”

The deer hunt and all of the things that were included were donated to USSA free of charge. According to Browning, the smiles on the kids faces were the best payment he could have ever received.

“It is all about the kids,” he said. “If taking these kids hunting, getting to know them, and seeing the excitement on their faces doesn’t touch your heart, then nothing will.”

The group took their trophies to a local taxidermist and after another overnight stay, they were off to Nixon for a hog hunt with another rancher.

“We rely solely on the generosity of people just like the Brownings and the Wiggingtons,” said O’Donoghue, “but membership dues are absolutely vital to the operations of the charity on a daily basis. Everyone on our staff and board performs their respective duties on a 100 percent volunteer basis without financial compensation of any kind, so we depend on membership dollars to help meet our many operational expenses.”

To learn more about the USSA and to see and read accounts of past hunts, visit their website at www.deerfood.com/ussa.htm.

You can also contact Ms. O’Donoghue by phone at 800-518-8019.
Brady ranchers take part in unique hunting opportunity

BY JAMES STEWART

With the hunting season winding down, two local ranchers took time out of their regular work schedule to host a different type of client. Their payment came in the most simple form—the smiling face of a child nearly bursting with pride.

With deer hunting as one of the area's largest businesses, the demand for quality hunts for Central Texas whitetails is big business. At a recent meeting of the Texas Deer Association, local ranchers Jimmy Browning and Burl Wigginton signed on for a different type of hunt.

Brigid O'Donoghue, founder of United Special Sportsmen Alliance (USSA) based in Pittsville, Wis., was looking for Texas ranches to host unique hunting parties. USSA is a non-profit Christian organization that coordinates with organizations worldwide to help fulfill dreams—dreams and wishes of terminally ill children to experience the great outdoors.

After a public request for Texas ranches to donate hunts, the two Brady ranchers stepped up to the challenge. Verbal commitments got the ball rolling and on the day after Christmas, two young hunters from the Midwest saw their dreams become reality.

Cory Smith, an 18-year-old from Altmont, Kan., was waiting at the lodge, the smile still easily seen at the slightest mention of the morning's hunt.

As nightfall came, Justin Jackson, a 15-year-old from Fort Worth, burst through the door and could hardly keep his emotions in check. Both teenagers had succeeded in harvesting trophy animals.

O'Donoghue, USSA president and founder, had personally driven from Wisconsin, picked up the boys, and escorted them to Brady. Decked out in full camouflage from accompanying the boys on their hunts, she was nearly as happy as the boys. Their guides, Browning and Wigginton, knew they had succeeded in their goal—to make a wish come true.

USSA was founded five years ago simply by accident. Through working with ranchers as a representative for her feed company, a situation came up that prompted her to look for the first child's hunt.

"When I got this program started, I had no idea how many kids who wanted to do things like this were out there," said O'Donoghue. "It started out with just a few and pretty soon, I was spending more time working with this program than I was working for my company.

"It started with a deer hunt here and there and has since moved to everything from fishing to dove and even bear hunting."

At her last rough estimate, she has some 800 children listed with the program who all have terminal or crippling diseases. According to O'Donoghue, there have been countless times when kids scheduled for a hunt leave the hospital and go almost directly to the field—most often out of sheer will and desire to experience the outdoors.

Smith had settled down and was relaxed since harvesting his trophy earlier that day. An avid hunter from Kansas, he had killed deer before, but never a true trophy like the one he got here in the Heart of Texas.

"I have hunted since I was little," said Smith, "but this is my first big buck. It was a nice 10-pointer that should score in the upper 140s on the Boone and Crockett scale."

As a dinner of venison steaks was being prepared in the kitchen, Jackson recanted the chain of events while Rusty Roberts, a professional videog-