TV show to cover special needs hunts

By Amber Dehnke

After granting more than 2,100 hunting and fishing wishes to disabled and chronically ill children, Bridg O’Donoughue has found a way to use TV to expand her mission.

Ms. O’Donoughue founded the United Special Sportsmen Alliance five years ago near Pittsville to provide special-needs hunts. She recently became chief executive officer of the Texas Deer Association, which works on programming through American Outdoor Adventures.

The TDA, based in San Antonio, Texas, has a goal of improving the overall deer experience for all enthusiasts. With members nationwide, the TDA works to promote better management, education, research and regulations for deer managers and hunters.

Ms. O’Donoughue attended a TDA convention in August 2004 after some TDA members told her about a hunting TV program. She wanted to get involved in the program.

“Karl Kinsel, TDA’s executive director, told me they wanted to appoint me CEO of their program,” Ms. O’Donoughue said.

As CEO, Ms. O’Donoughue has been involved in various parts of operation, notably those associated with its new TV show. The TDA’s leaders hope to broadcast 13 shows nationwide in 2006 and 26 episodes in 2007.

Starring the same type of children Ms. O’Donoughue has been working with through the USSA, the show’s central theme will be safety and true sportsmanship. On average, there will be two special children’s hunting wishes being granted in each of the TDA’s American Outdoor Adventures shows.

“Every time I grant a child’s wish, I feel I have reached my goal. But in the back of my mind, I have always wanted to get a special show just for these special children,” Ms. O’Donoughue said. “USSA currently has group hunts where there are up to 15 children involved. Down the road, I would like to bring these hunts to television.”

As in her USSA program, the TV show will mainly be based around whitetail deer hunts but also will include more exotic game and some fishing. Show highlights also include searching for deer antler sheds and looking for arrowheads, with some spontaneous humor mixed in.

For now, the TV hunts will take place in the United States.

“We anticipate doing shows in Canada and Mexico as the show gets going,” Ms. O’Donoughue said.

She said she thinks the TV program will benefit a lot of people.

“For those who don’t have a disability, it makes them realize what these children endure,” she said. “For those with disabilities, it makes them realize they are not alone.”

She said all types of children — even those in inner cities — can see how much there is to explore in the outdoors.

Ms. O’Donoughue said there are many children who have nobody to introduce them to hunting and fishing. She said the USSA and TDA, working together, are going to do everything possible to reach out to those children.

“Hunting teaches ethics, sportsmanship, accountability and a responsible value system for life. Hunting instills a deep appreciation in our children of our country’s woodlands and wildlife,” Ms. O’Donoughue said.