

Heroes' Hunt for Wounded Warriors

*Giving Back to Veterans Who
Gave it All for Our Freedom...*

By Brian Ball

As I watch the second buck of the evening enter the retired landfill area adjacent to my land and chase does around, I'm thinking it would sure be nice to be able to hunt the City of Waupun's retired landfills. But I've lived here most of my life and know that it is forbidden. So, I just watch year after year deer, and now turkeys, have free run of 60+ acres. This got me thinking... "I've been a Patriot Guard Rider for about 4 years now and I have seen the worst of what war can do to our servicemen and women. I wonder if there is an opportunity here for our wounded veterans." Fortunately, with today's advanced medical capabilities on the front line, many soldiers who would have been killed are now surviving their injuries. However, for many of these veterans, who were once hunters, the opportunity to get back in the woods is now much more difficult. Thus, the formation of organizations such as the Heroes' Hunt for Wounded Warriors, which helps injured vets in many ways.

With that recognition and thought process regarding the retired landfill sites, I approached the City of Waupun's Director of Public Works, Dick Flynn, a retired Navy Sea Bee, about opening the city's two retired landfill areas to hunting for combat wounded vets. Dick thought it was a great idea and after a couple meetings, it was OK'd. So I talked with several friends of mine and told them of my plan to build

handicap-accessible blinds in the landfill areas and Heroes' Hunt for Wounded Warriors was born. We got in touch with the several different Veterans' organizations and told them of our plan to provide fully guided, free hunts for our deserving injured Vets. They were very excited about it and said they would provide the hunters.

Well, our first season of HHWW hunts is in the books. The great success we encountered was no doubt because of the great hunting land offered to HHWW. The City of Waupun, Jake Hoffman of Randolph, Ron and Henri Raith of Waupun, Tom and Bob Reabe of Waupun, Wings Over Wisconsin Waupun Chapter, Rob and Lori Quandt of Fox Lake, Ron Van Hierden of Fox Lake, Vance, Andy and Eli Glewen of Alto are all landowners who've given HHWW access to their land for our vets to hunt on. Without willing landowners, none of this would be possible. Next, without our volunteer guides and board members these hunts would not take place, thank you Jeff, Jeff, Loudon, Floyd, Jay, Scott, Bill and Dave.

We, as a whole, guided 14 vets this past fall, took 6 bucks and 13 does, 15 ducks, 4 geese and 2 pheasants.

Our community has really embraced HHWW. The AmericInn Hotel & Suites gave our Vets free rooms each weekend. The Goose Shot Bar & Grill gave them free prime rib dinners each Saturday night. Pizza Ranch and Helen's



Master Sergeant, Leon Chovan, harvested the first deer of the inaugural HHWW bow season by Manchester on Ron Raith's land. Pictured from left: Brian Ball, HHWW Founder/Chairman, Floyd Respalje, Vice President HHWW, Tim Folkers, Veteran, Leon Chovan, Veteran and Ron Chovan, Leon's brother

Kitchen gave them free meals on Saturday and Sunday. King Mfg, National Bank of Waupun, American Legion Post 210, VFW Post 6709, and NAPA Auto Parts were all major

sponsors of our permanent blinds. Many other sponsors enabled us to purchase seven pop-up blinds, and we built two permanent and purchased one fiberglass blind. Horny Buck Seed Co. generously donated food plot seed creating food plots that were largely responsible for bringing in the deer the vets were able to harvest.

On a typical hunt, our vet and sometimes a guest, would arrive on Saturday at noon. After introductions to the guide and board member, we get them checked in at the AmericInn Hotel & Suites in Waupun, then either go to eat at Pizza Ranch (free for the vet/hunter) or to my house for target practice. When our hunter is ready and comfortable with the weapon, we take him for a ride around the area, fishing in Rock River, or just talk and tell stories until it's time to hunt.

We were extremely blessed to have had such a successful first

I was honored to be able to bowhunt this fall with Heroes' Hunt for Wounded Warriors. I met Brian at the hotel and he made me feel very comfortable and relaxed. The hunt was a great time! What really stood out to me was that I felt the whole town supported this and was thankful for veterans. The hotel had a bunch of free snacks and the Saturday night dinner was top notch. I was able to meet, talk and hang out with other Veterans and form lasting relationships. I also was able to make new friends with some of the land owners. They invited me back to rifle hunt with them! I can't thank the City of Waupun, Brian, Randy and Avery enough. I hope to be able to participate again this year as I genuinely felt thanked for my service.

-Matt Tennesen, Veteran, Purple Heart Recipient

season. More hunts than not resulted in deer taken. Al and Janet Feucht of Brandon Meats provided free processing for all deer taken, Thank you! These hunts, as you can see, are all about giving back to the vet a sense of normalcy.

Tim Freitag got this 8 point buck by Fox Lake on the Reabe farm.



Tim Folkers got his first deer with HHWW, an 8 pointer on the City of Waupun's retired landfill.



Dan Voliva harvested this doe with HHWW and later returned to get his first buck, a 4 pointer near Randolph on Jake Hoffman's farm.



Currently, we are offering hunts for two hunters per weekend throughout bow season and gun deer season. We are looking for other land owners with good hunting land and easy access to step forward so we can offer more places to hunt. Our vision is to see this organization grow into more communities, as others step forward to help our vets who've left their blood on the battlefield for our freedom. This could be the solution to some communities with overpopulation of deer in urban areas.

Of course, this all costs money. Our expenses include but are not limited to; building supplies for permanent blinds, portable blinds, licenses for the hunter, food, go-pro cameras, etc. We are looking for donations of cash or products that will ensure these hunts can continue year after year. Any help you would be willing to provide is much appreciated. For more information, or if you or someone you know is a vet and

would like to hunt with HHWW, call Brian Ball at (920)324-8886 or visit www.HeroesHuntforWW.org.

One of our main problems now is some of our hunters are from out-of-state and a non-resident license is \$160. That is extremely costly to HHWW especially for 1.5 day hunt. We're trying to get that reduced or eliminated all together, as these veterans aren't your ordinary non-residents. These soldiers sacrificed so much for us. It would be nice if we could use the money we have to improve their hunting experience rather than have to pay the steep cost for an out of state license.

After our first deer hunting season, we received a letter from one of our hunters/vets that reminded us why we do what we do. Levi Koski is a 2-Purple-Heart recipient after being severely wounded in Iraq. The following is his letter:

Over the summer of 2014, a friend and fellow veteran told me about Brian and Heroes' Hunt For Wounded Warriors. He didn't give me any background, so I didn't know at all what to expect. But he did mention three key elements.....a name, a phone number, and deer.

After meeting Brian over the phone and making arrangements, I pointed my truck south towards Waupun, still without much of an idea of what to expect. Upon arriving at the AmericInn Hotel & Suites of Waupun, Brian told me I would be staying at, I was immediately greeted by FIRST NAME by the manager and the employees. They told me what an honor it was to meet me and they were so pleased I was staying with them. This took me completely by shock. I was even more amazed when I found a care package, patriotically decorated, and a hand written letter (which I kept and still have) thanking me and offering any services to make my stay as comfortable as possible (this included setting out breakfast hours early, just for me, even after I insisted not to trouble themselves). I began to feel a lump growing in my throat.

After meeting Brian in person, we enjoyed some great conversation in his incredible hand built cabin, and squeezed in an evening hunt. After the evening hunt, Brian and his lovely wife escorted me to dinner at a wonderful local restaurant, The Goose Shot Bar & Grill, where I got the pleasure of meeting the owner. He too thanked me for my service, and

offered their house specialty prime rib dinner, on the house, which I happily accepted and enjoyed. The lump in my throat continued to grow.

The next morning I was picked up at the motel before the sun, but after enjoying a wonderful complimentary breakfast. For the morning hunt, I was guided by an HHWW volunteer by the name of Dave. Dave and I hit it off famously, and spent the entire morning talking about hunts of yesteryear that we enjoyed in the great Nicolet National Forest in northern Wisconsin. After the hunt, Dave brought me out for a phenomenal breakfast at Helen's Kitchen, which once again was covered by the incredibly generous owner. I felt the lump in my throat grow even bigger.

That afternoon found Brian and I debating over an evening hunt in the duck blind, or in the deer blind. My passion for whitetails won out. We didn't have to wait long until our conversation was interrupted and we were surrounded literally on all sides by deer, including one handsome buck. I was fortunate enough to harvest not one, but two healthy, mature and delicious adult does. Brian helped me dress the deer, load them, and we bid farewell before I headed home to display my trophies to my wife, friends and family.

On the way home, I had time to reflect upon the incredible weekend, and why it left me with such a lump in my throat. Up until this point, I have never shared this bit of information with anyone, including Brian.

After I returned from serving in Iraq and completing my demobilization process, I simply drove myself home in the middle of the night, back to my farm house at the end of a dead end road in deep forest of northern Wisconsin. There were no lights and sirens, banners or parades, music or parties. I simply came home and went back to work. The more I realized life around me had continued while I was gone, the more I wondered how much my absence had been noticed. It is a dark, scary and sad place for a veteran to be when they feel they have been forgotten. My love and passion for the outdoors, and the healing powers of the northern wilderness helped me heal, physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually. I didn't feel I was missing anything, until I became

a part of Heroes Hunt For Wounded Warriors. It has been 8 years since I returned from Iraq, but I feel Heroes Hunt For Wounded Warriors gave me the welcome home parade I never had. From hunting and bonding with Heroes Hunt For Wounded Warriors volunteers, to having meals bought for me, to being given a hand written thank you letter, to Brian simply introducing me to folks at the local gas station, I felt welcomed and embraced by an entire town. I felt like I was being welcomed home at last.

That night while driving home, I felt that lump in my throat continue to grow, and I can feel it still today as I write this. Heroes Hunt for Wounded Warriors gave me so much more than just an appreciation hunt. They gave me a homecoming I will forever appreciate and never forget. I am honored to be a part of Heroes Hunt For Wounded Warriors, I am humbled to now call Brian, Dave and the volunteers my dearest friends, and may God bless the program and each person involved. Thank you, thank you, from the bottom of my heart, thank you.

--Levi Koski U.S. Army Infantry



Brian Ball has been a life-long hunter and fisherman and greatly enjoys the outdoors. When his nephew, Nate, returned home after serving two tours in Afghanistan with the Marine Corp, he was not a happy-go-lucky kid anymore. However, after he harvested a nice buck on his land, Brian could see joy return to his life. The idea of providing our deserving Veterans guided hunts had been building in his head for a many years, and he then decided it was time to make this idea a reality. Thus he began the Heroes' Hunt for Wounded Warriors. With the help of God, family and friends, this non-profit, 100% volunteer organization has been truly blessed into what it is today. It's so wonderful to see the smiles and excitement on the faces of the vets who hunt with us, and after each hunt he feels blessed to have made a new friend.

Veterans That Hunted Fall 2014

- Leon Chovan
- Dan Voliva
- Brad Karnitz
- Trent Keenlance
- Tim Folkers
- Chad Levenson
- Tim Freitag
- Matt Tennesen
- John Melain
- Dan Hopp
- Nate Ball
- Levi Koski
- Cecil Stroud