

Physical challenges don't keep these hunters from a successful outing

A special deer hunt for physically challenged persons brought several hunters to the George Klaus farm on River Road, just east of Galesville.

The special hunt was held Oct. 1 through Oct. 10, and

the first weekend 12 hunters participated.

According to Zach Klaus, George's son, hunters' disabilities ranged from wheelchair bound to diabetes to blindness. "We tease the blind guy because although he never saw a deer, he took a shot in the dark and managed to harvest a nice doe," Klaus said. "Talk about one happy hunter. His mentor, who helped guide him, was just as happy.

"It was a great group of guys. Their dedication and strength is unbelievable."

The hunt was organized by the North American Squirrel Association (NASA), which has as its goal to bring the great outdoors to the physically challenged.

Mike Derpinghaus of Holmen is a member of NASA and also is a physically-challenged hunter. He had requested permission to turkey hunt on the Klaus property just east of Galesville, and then approached Zach about sponsoring a deer hunt for the physically challenged.

The special hunt is organized through the state DNR, property is designated for that hunt, and is closed to all other

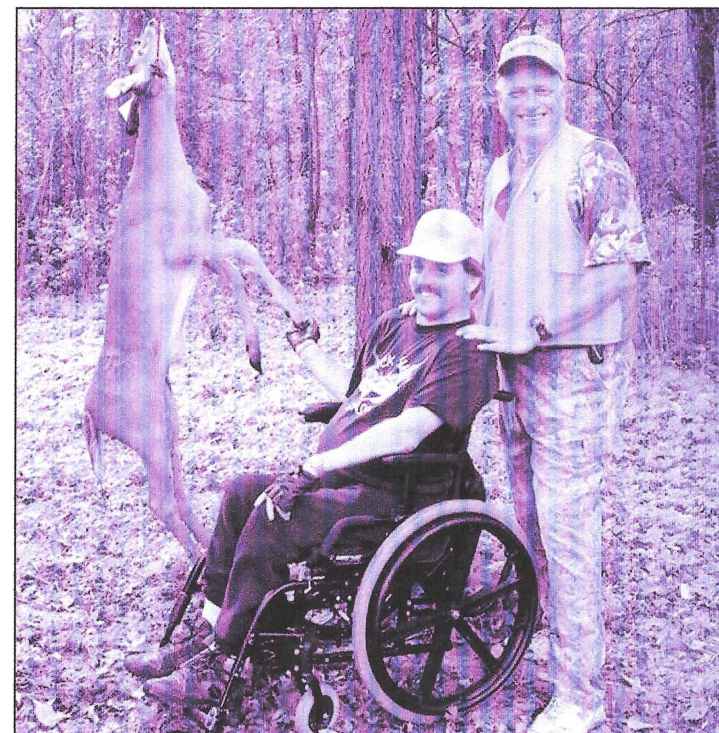
hunting during that time. Hunters participating must register with the DNR.

Klaus said he believes the recent hunt on his father's property is the largest for physically challenged in the state, with 22 hunters signed up.

Last spring NASA held a fund raiser for the hunt and monies raised were used to build hunting blinds, purchase special firearms for blind hunters and to buy other items such as radios. During the summer, volunteers prepared hunting stand locations, set up blinds and made accessible trails to the stands.

Each hunter is assigned a mentor to assist as needed, and hunting stands are assigned based on the handicap. Those who hunt from their vehicles, go along field edges, and hunters with limited mobility are placed in blinds with wooden floors to accommodate wheel chairs.

Those who are more mobile, including blind hunters, are placed in collapsible blinds located in less accessible locations. All hunters are in contact with the base camp through the use of two-way radios.



Robert Connelly (left), Milwaukee, was one of the participants in a deer hunt held near Galesville last week for physically-challenged people. Tony Chrishnovich, of Onalaska, helped organize the hunt and served as one of the hunter mentors. Contributed photo