

North American Squirrel Association

A Hunting and Fishing Program for the Physically Challenged

When the north winds put a chill in the air this fall, some hunters who otherwise might not have had the chance to participate in the season will be there, thanks to the North American Squirrel Association (nasa).

The nasa program is a new sportsman's organization that gives physically challenged individuals opportunities they otherwise may never get. Nasa's main purpose is to make the great outdoors more accessible to those who simply can't get out by themselves, whether due to a disability, age, or youth. With this program, these special hunters will enjoy the thrills and atmosphere of hunting that many take for granted.

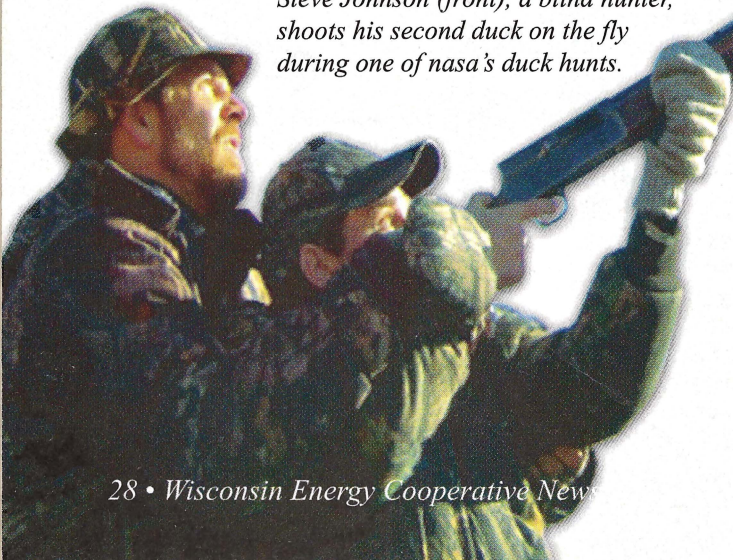
When Tony Christnovich of Holmen and some friends decided to form a tournament for squirrel hunters in the same spirit as the successful and popular bass tournaments, they formed nasa to run the tournament. This became the focus of how they could help the disadvantaged get more involved in the outdoors.

They have raised considerable amount of money towards those goals and have also received impressive donations of materials, land, expertise, and volunteer time to make their ideas come true.

In 2004, nasa began an annual banquet as another big fund-raiser in addition to the squirrel derby. Donations received through the banquet this year in April made many new projects possible for the group.

"So many tickets were sold for the banquet, and many members of the community stepped up to donate many things we needed. It says a lot about our community," Tony said.

Steve Johnson (front), a blind hunter, shoots his second duck on the fly during one of nasa's duck hunts.



Pat Lamke (left) and Dave Conklin (right) pose in front of the nasa sign in one of the 22 donated hunting blinds at the banquet held in April.

For fall and winter of 2005 they hope to have several nice hunting blinds available for deer hunting and for turkey hunting in the spring. The blinds will be posted on donated land, including the 700 acres of prime hunting land that was donated along the Black River. A special deer hunting camp is planned on the property for October 1 through the 9th. Physically challenged hunters can apply for the experience on the nasa web site (www.nasasquirrel.org).

Another major investment made possible by the banquet and the squirrel derby is a pontoon boat located near Schafer's Boats and Bait on Brice Prairie at the north end of Lake Onalaska. The boat has a wheelchair hoist and seating for up to eight people. There is no charge to use the pontoon, and gas is provided. If needed, a volunteer will also pilot the boat.

A handicapped fishing pier will eventually be built at the landing site as well, with the cooperation of the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. The group is also helping to expand the parking lot with more paving, handicapped parking, and handicapped toilets. Another pier is also planned for Lake Neshonic in West Salem.

Several organized events are planned throughout the year. Last October, the group sponsored a disabled duck hunt in Trempealeau Wildlife Refuge, and this year a youth trout fishing outing was held on July 11. A special pheasant hunt is also planned for The Holmes Creek Pheasant farm on September 17. In addition, ski lessons for children with disabilities are also available at Mt. La Crosse, including free use of ski equipment. ▶

Nasa also offers those in need of hunting or fishing assistance, a "buddy." A buddy is a volunteer who when called upon will coordinate the time, place, and when necessary, materials needed to make a trip possible. The buddy outdoor experience (hunting, fishing, hiking, boating, etc.) can also be created through their web site.

Nasa is not dedicated to collecting the biggest and best that nature (or our own "quality management") has to offer, but to encouraging simple participation in outdoor activities by even the most challenged among us. The goal is not necessarily a trophy. It is enjoying the outdoors, appreciating the game they seek, experiencing the quest, and sharing fun with others.

"I have shot a lot of deer and caught a lot of fish in my time—I don't need to get more for myself. It is so rewarding to see the look on someone's face who never thought that they could get out again," stated Tony.

For more information on this organization, or if you wish to participate in any of these events or volunteer as a "buddy," please visit nasa's web site at www.nasasquirrel.org or call Tony at (608) 781-3100. ■

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Celebrate October Co-op Month!
Member Appreciation Day
Wednesday,
October 5, 2005

Riverland Energy Cooperative
Headquarters Building
N28988 State Road 93, Arcadia

10:30 a.m – 4 p.m.
Food will be served from 11 a.m – 2 p.m.

Enjoy an Oktoberfest atmosphere!

- Brats, hotdogs, ice cream, and more
- Capital credit checks for eligible members
- Health & Human Services to administer Flu (subject to the availability of the vaccine), Pneumonia, and Tetanus shots
- Booths and displays
- Door prize drawings

Look for more information in the next WEC News.

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Arcadia: 7:30 a.m.–4:30 p.m.
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