

Nasa receives Tribune/DNR Hunter Ethics Award



JERRY DAVIS

Freelance outdoors writer

The North American Squirrel Association is the recipient of the 2005 La Crosse Tribune/Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources Hunter Ethics Award.

Only once before in the nine-year history of the award has an organization been honored. In 2001, the



Christnovich

Wisconsin Bear Hunters were selected by the three-member panel of Steve Deward, DNR warden supervisor in La Crosse,

Tribune Outdoors Editor Bob Lamb and freelance outdoors writer Jerry Davis.

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JERRY DAVIS / FOR THE LA CROSSE TRIBUNE

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"We wrote our bylaws using money from the first profit we made from our squirrel derby," said Tony Christnovich, co-founder. "There are no members, only volunteers. If we had formal memberships, we'd have to have a quorum and vote on everything we do. This way, if a need or opportunity comes up, we can do it to help someone enjoy the outdoors."

This year's squirrel derby was held in late January. A fundraising banquet is scheduled on Wednesday, April 5, at Stoney Creek Inn, Onalaska, Wis. More than 100 hunters participated in the squirrel derby hunt and about 40 more joined for a meal after the hunt.

Volunteers who help nasa provide opportunities, and individuals who have benefited from nasa's help, commend the organization.

"About four years ago I got involved in nasa," said Mike Derpinghaus, who is

LA CROSSE TRIBUNE/WISCONSIN DNR HUNTER ETHICS AWARD

ADULT DIVISION

2005: North American Squirrel Association, Holmen, Wis.

2004: Dale Petkovsek, Willard, Wis.

2003: Zachary Klaus, Rochester, Minn.

2002: Gerald Meyer, Waterford, Wis., and James Swentik, Delafield, Wis.

2001: Wisconsin Bear Hunters Association.

2000: Ronald Fehlen, Osceola, Wis.

1999: Gregory G. Highstrom, Cedarburg, Wis.

1998: Michael Rogers, Sauk City, Wis.

1997: Jim Olson and Mike Kasten, Onalaska, Wis.

YOUTH DIVISION

2005: None.

2004: Matt Wee, West Salem, Wis.

2003: None.

2002: Max Hedrington, Rib Lake, Wis.

2001: Adam Malin, Stoddard, Wis., and Megan Larson, Marshfield, Wis.

2000: Caron Sedlmayr, Stoddard, Wis., and Shane McGinn, Shawano, Wis.

NASA

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wheelchair-bound. "Now I'm working with the group and see all the smiling faces on people who get to participate in our duck hunt, our deer camp and everything else we do."

When Derpinghaus moved to the Coulee Region, he had never hunted from his wheelchair. He's pleased there are organizations like nasa to help.

"It's groups like this that got me up and outdoors," Derpinghaus said. "Our purpose is to provide opportunities for people to get outdoors instead of falling into that sedentary lifestyle."

Derpinghaus said that while it is possible for some physically-challenged people to shoot deer from a vehicle, nasa provides more.

"We had an actual deer camp at Zachary Klaus' property north of La Crosse and everyone was sitting around a campfire. It's one thing to hunt deer, but quite another to participate in a deer camp. That's something I could only dream of doing until now."

It's providing these opportunities that caught Dewald's attention during the selection process last month.

"They (nasa) have opened doors for people with special challenges," Dewald said. "The more people who have an opportunity to enjoy the outdoors, the more we have to help preserve outdoors opportunities. The key to these people is the experience, not whether they catch a fish and kill a deer, pheasant or duck."

Dewald said nasa was an obvious choice this year, because of such great work they are doing and how nicely their goals fit with the award statement, which is "hunters doing something for someone else; hunters doing something for hunting, rather than doing something for personal gain."

Nasa plans to buy a small tractor this spring and mount a front platform to hold a wheelchair.

"We hope to be able to take physically-challenged pheasant hunters out in the field," Christnovich said. "We've had lots of pheasants donated and we'll use pointing dogs, drive the hunter to the dog on point and he or she can shoot from the wheelchair on the platform. We have a cow elk hunt that was donated, and we'll continue things we've done in the past."

It may be more than coincidental that a small mammal, a squirrel, which is sometimes looked down upon by hunters, is the symbol for nasa. But that choice has worked to help hunters who wouldn't normally be able to participate in outdoors activities.

"It's been a great draw when we're at sports shows," Derpinghaus said. "People will see our squirrel logo and come over and ask why squirrels need help from conservation groups."

To learn more about nasa, go to www.nasasquirrel.org, e-mail nasasquirrel@yahoo.com or call (608) 781-3100.

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