

# COURIER-INDEX

MARIANNA, ARKANSAS

December 7, 2016

145 No. 20

Lee County's Newspaper Since 1872

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Lee  
Academy



ing their lists

ldridge, left, and Karson Harris are all smiles as they tell Santa and Mrs. Claus what they want for Christmas. Many children stood in line for their chance to visit with the couple and share their Christmas lists during the Marianna Christmas Lighting Ceremony held last week at the Historic Town Court Square.

Photo by DJ McMickle

## Local resident thanks veterans with duck, deer hunting trip

Red Oak Plantation, French to host wounded soldiers

By Caitlyn Sweet  
Courier-Index

U.S. military veterans sacrifice life and limb to serve their country and one Delta resident has decided to offer what he can to give back to them by hosting an all expenses paid hunting trip for four Purple Heart veterans from across the country through the Wounded Warriors in Action Foundation.

The veterans will spend three full days hunting ducks and white-tailed deer with a local guide.

William French, host for the event, said his family farm, Red Oak Plantation, is located just outside of Marianna and is great for duck and deer hunting — a pastime he greatly enjoys — but he would not be able to enjoy it if it were not for the medical advances in prosthetics which are, in large part due to the research that has been done to improve the lives of wounded soldiers returning from war.

"Two years ago, I lost a leg due to a staph infection. I'm

still able to come to my farm and hunt and fish and do all the things I love to do because of the advances in medical technology that allow for stronger, more manageable prosthetics," said French.

French said he realized he was not the only person living with a lost limb. When he learned the rate of military veterans who return with such injuries, he decided to set up this hunting trip.

"You know, our military veterans are part of the reason these advances have come so far. We have soldiers returning from war with injuries that require them to live with prosthetics for the rest of their lives. I got to thinking about what I could do to give back to those soldiers and give them a chance to do something memorable and enjoyable. I contacted the Wounded Warriors in Action Foundation — which, this sort of thing is all they do, setting up these opportunities for the veterans and covering all of the expenses — and we set up this trip. I hope it will be

the first of many," he explained.

According to a press release from WWIA, "Wounded Warriors frequently return home different than when they left to serve our Nation — life in general and their personal and professional lives have changed dramatically. WWIA and hosts like William strive to show these Heroes that they can still experience and accomplish milestones in their lives, no matter their current circumstances."

The four Purple Heart veterans from Michigan, Texas, Utah and the western part of Arkansas will arrive in the Delta on Thursday, Dec. 8, to start their trip.

"Once they get here, I'll take care of everything they need. We'll feed them and house them and thanks to WWIA, it won't cost them a penny. I'm happy to get the chance to meet these guys and do something like this for them. I mean, I might even get more out of it than they do," he laughed.