Notes From the Field: January 2019

Each year we build upon our past successes as we continue our mission to serve our heroes by hosting world-class sporting events with the love and support of caring communities all across the nation. WWLA started the new year with five events in the month of January that included the opportunity to hunt trophy deer, quail, pheasant, duck, and goose. We're still getting started and have lots of incredible events to come. Be sure to stay tuned for more updates and highlights. Finally, don't forget to check out our January Spotlight featuring one of our exceptional event hosts!

Events and Fundraisers

2nd Annual Long Leaf AL Whitetail and Quail Hunt

January 6th - 7th

Four of our heroes traveled to scenic Bay Minette, Alabama for the 2nd Annual Long Leaf AL Whitetail and Quail Hunt. Our heroes experienced four full days of high-class deer hunting, quail hunting, and enjoyed amazing food and accommodations while forming new bonds with their fellow brothers. All of our heroes found success in the field as each of them harvested a deer and quail and one even managed to harvest a hog. The beautiful surroundings at this event provided the perfect backdrop for hunting and relaxation to occur. All of our heroes happily went home with loads of memories and a little bit of merchandise from their time at Long Leaf! We extend our gratitude and appreciation to our host Andy McMillan, as well as his family and friends for hosting another spectacular event. Our sincere thanks as well to WWLA's Best in the West for his support and care throughout this event.

8th Annual NC OBX Waterfowl Hunt

January 10th - 12th

The 8th Annual NC OBX Waterfowl Hunt proudly welcomed all of our heroes to beautiful NC for waterfowl hunting, great food, and bonding time with their fellow Purple Heart recipients.
The incredible community support from around the state is one of the things that makes this event so special. One example of this is our heroes being presented with handwritten letters from two local elementary schools on their last day, thanking them for their service and sacrifice. The time in the wilderness was enjoyable as our heroes harvested lots of wildfowl and shared many stories and laughs. On the morning of our Homers final day, the Wet, Wetzel Waters, Connell County Wildlife, and Connell County Fire Department, a non-profit company, and members of the community gathered to honor and show their appreciation for our heroes as they prepared to return home. It was a memorable experience that capped off a tremendous event. Additional thanks to the local businesses and restaurants that graciously served our heroes throughout their stay. Special thanks to hosts Larry Denney, Tim Brown, and Tom Denney for putting on an outstanding event for our heroes. Special recognition and thanks to WWHA Guides Nick Fox and Jeremy Smith for their contributions throughout the event.

I have a lot I want to share but I don’t know how to express how much I appreciate both of you. I’ll try to do the best I can. To point out the point, coming out was the best decision I have made in a long time. I had a blast! I was definitely able to put those bad moments and stress behind me. The community’s hospitality was unforgettable. I am grateful to know that people still care. I will never forget and cherish my experience with all my friends and family about the WWHA. Outstanding Guys, thanks!!!

8th Annual SW Ohio Duck Hunt
January 19th - 21st

The 8th annual SW Ohio Duck Hunt brought these of our heroes together for four days of fishing, camaraderie, duck and pheasant hunting. Although the weather was challenging this year, it did not deter our heroes from sharing experiences and forming bonds in the field and around the dinner table. This event would not be possible without the tremendous financial support of Skeeter Club International SW Ohio Chapter, Clark County Sportsman’s Club, and Northern Kentucky/Cincinnati, Rio Grande Club, Additional thanks to David G. Cantwell for providing lodging and celebrating hospitality to our heroes, and to WWHA P-7 Warrant Richard Whitehead for his support and efforts. Our gratitude and thanks to hosts (Dale Westerlund and Tom Cold for putting on another top tier event and to Wilson Guide Jake Whipkey for his support and care of our heroes throughout the trip.

“This was the best I’ve been in a while. I’ve been in a different place mentally due to work and home. I’ve had altercations with other things, which has made it better. I’m feeling better. The time and effort that our support personnel put in to ensure we had an enjoyable time after all we had both to shoot at was truly admirable. I can’t put into words the experience of getting to know my hail. It was truly an honor to have been part of such a great experience. Thanks to all that made the weekend a success. I have a lot to think.”

7th Annual MD Duck & Goose Hunt
January 16th - 21st

Six of our Purple Heart Heroes gathered in Easton, Maryland for the 7th Annual MD Duck and Goose Hunt. This one-day event featured world-class goose, duck, and pheasant hunting. Our heroes were able to successfully harvest birds, but the true highlight of the event was the opportunity to build strong new friends with these fellow veterans. Special thanks to Talbot Roof & Gutter, Inc. for allowing our heroes to take in some flat shooting in preparation for the weekend hunt. We would also like to extend our sincere appreciation to host Brian O’Hara and friends for their tremendous care and hospitality throughout the event. High praise and gratitude to WWHA Guides Tim Spence and Jake Pimentel for their outstanding efforts and coordination.

“Another great trip! Thank you WWHA for an awesome event. Meeting all of these great veterans was the highlight. Being able to shoot with one's own gun was a bonus. There was no shortage of good conversation, fun times, and great food. I am confident that this will not be the last year we join for this event. It is exciting to hear the stories of everyone's daily life and how much this experience has changed the way we see things. It really is a great experience.”

9th Annual Russell AL Deer Hunt
January 6th - 21st

More than 250 heroes joined us for the 9th Annual Russell AL Deer Hunt. This one-day event featured world-class deer hunting. Our heroes were able to successfully harvest deer, but the true highlight of the event was the opportunity to build strong new friends with these fellow veterans. Special thanks to Russell, AL for providing the venue and to WWHA Guides Nick Fox and Jeremy Smith for their support and care of our heroes throughout the trip.
Four of our heroes gathered in Headquarters, AL for the 2019 Russell Alabama Deer Hunt. This four-day event celebrated their 39th consecutive year of welcoming heroes and provided them with some well-deserved time away from the burdens of everyday life. This allowed them to relax in the great outdoors, share stories, and build new friendships.

Throughout their stay, they experienced top-notch food, lodging, and hunting. Our heroes found great success in the field, as they harvested a pair of hogs along with deer. As great as the hunting was, our heroes spoke fondly about the new bonds formed between brothers and expressed their deep appreciation and gratitude to both the hosts and the local community for hosting them throughout the event. We would like to extend our sincere thanks to hosts Rob and Janie Russell for another outstanding event and for their tremendous support of WWIA and our heroes throughout the last nine years. Special recognition to WWIA Guide Jeremy Smith for his support and attention throughout the event.

“This experience has been completely astounding. Meeting fellow veterans, Purple Heart recipients, seeing signs with my name on it...and being a deer hunter that kids rib me that the other service members are one of these feelings that never happens and can’t be replicated. The hosts of the Russell’s AL have showed more appreciation and hospitality than I ever dreamed. It was far better than was expected and very heart-warming. I will forever have to express my appreciation and gratitude for this experience and opportunity. Thanks for everything. You helped us gain more insight and have a great time. A real great to spend the weekend with you and the other two. The WWIA truly gave me a sense of worth and appreciation which I’ve been made to feel almost daily, but this made every insect, pour and tear a valuable experience for me. Thank you.”

The Inaugural WWIA 5K is Coming!

WWIA 5K
Run, Walk, Stroll.
29 June 2019 - AL Lopez Park
Benefiting Purple Heart Recipients

LET’S HIT THE ROAD IN SUPPORT OF OUR PURPLE HEART HEROES

The WWIA 5K has been institutionalized! That means you’ll have time to get yourself, your friends, your family, and your co-workers registered. Join us on Saturday, June 29, 2019. This 5K offers you the choice to run, walk, or stroll through beautiful AL Lopez Park. The race is professionally timed, and the overall top male and female finishers will receive prizes. Top male and top female finishers in each age category will also be acknowledged. We have an offer for our veterans, awards, and more. Discounted registration is available for veterans who show their military ID or Driver’s License with a “V” symbol at packet pickup with Promo Code VIP300. Purple Heart recipients will be able to participate free with registration to WWIA for using Promo Code PHREE. Visit https://www.eventbrite.com and complete all three steps on the top of the page. Proceeds benefit the WWIA, and we have limited sponsorship opportunities available. Please email us at info@wwia.org for more information. Thank you.

WWIA January Spotlight

HOST SPOTLIGHT

MARY LOU REISDORF

It is with great honor and pride that we introduce you to our January Spotlight Feature; WWIA Host Mary Lou Reisdorf. Mary Lou currently resides at the KPлоткет Bird and Country Estates and will coordinate our WWIA August 2019 Spotlight. More information forthcoming.
Mary Lou, can you give us a brief introduction and tell us a little about yourself and your family?

I was born in a small town, Cattaraugus, South of Buffalo, NY. It was an amazing place to visit my grandparents, with a wonderful mother, father, 2 brothers, 1 sister, many relatives, and very good friends. I attended college earning my BA and Master’s in Education. I had the pleasure to teach in MG, GA, as well as three years of teaching for the military in Japan and Germany. I returned to NY and married Jim (J.I.) Kessendorf in 1968 and we were soon blessed with our daughter, Christie. We moved from a small town, Arcade, NY to the Rochester, NY area in 1973 and continued to teach in that area while Jim was a co-owner of a business, Information Packaging. We were able to travel and even bought a 3rd home in Hoboken, N.J. and spent a lot of time there - retired my 55+ year teaching career in 2001. In 2005 we purchased 75 acres of land in Chemung, NY calling it “Hillcrest Farm and ‘Hillcrest’ the name coming from the best base area in Wayne County that was shot on the property. It quickly became our favorite place to spend time. We added a barn, ponds, etc. and used the land regularly to entertain friends, host shoot, and ride the beautiful trails. I love our property, traveling, cards, board games, reading, movies and just being with our many friends/family. It was always Jim’s dream to see our property to help those who had served in the military. Unfortunately, my husband Jim passed away on November 7th, 2013. I have since continued a wonderful life with best friends, enjoying time at ‘Hillcrest Farm’, great travels, and the best part is hosting the WWVA NY Upland Bird Hunt/Couples Retreat, which is now held on our property.

How did you first get involved with WWVA?

Jim served as a Marine in Vietnam, honorably discharged in 1966. He also served in the Army Reserves for 4 years, being honorably discharged in 1980. He never spoke about his experiences in Vietnam, he simply could not talk about it, or even see any war movies. Jim had an amazing personality, he was a loving, great husband, father, and friend. In 2005, Jim was watching TV and saw a WWVA event hosted by John McDaniels. I wasn’t home at the time, but when I returned, Jim explained the event and said “Mary Lou, we can and need to do this!” I agreed completely, we called John and thankfully he said yes to our request to host an event and in 2010 we hosted our very first hunt. It was an amazing experience and so rewarding to us. A great time to give back! I can’t even begin to explain the change in Jim after that, but he finally started to share his past experiences with family and friends. I believe it was all a result of him giving back to others.

Why do you choose to be a WWVA Host?

Hosting our WWVA event has been an amazing adventure. It has given us a chance to honor and respect what these Purple Heart recipients have sacrificed for each of us in America. Initially, in 2010 and 2011 we only hosted Purple Heart Heroes. Shawn Henry was one of those Heroes. He lives near Camp Lejeune in North Carolina. Because Shawn and his family were close to where we hold the hunt, we were able to spend time with Shawn, his wife Pat and their 2 sons each time we were there. After hearing Pat’s stories as a hero spouse, learning about her own pain, the many sacrifices she had made, responsibility she had to KNOW, and not enlisting for Shawn, I asked Pat, “Well, what did you do to get the sacrifices you have also made?” We shared our thoughts with John McDaniels and in 2012 we proudly welcomed heroines and their spouses in our event, officially changing our title to WWVA Upland NY Bird Hunt/Couples Retreat. It is hard to explain the dynamic impact of making this a couples event. The wives, some of whom have also served in the military or were themselves awarded a Purple Heart, now have the opportunity to share their own experiences, cares, and concerns with others who have walked in their shoes. The heroes love their passionate hosting experiences and the wives love the view too. Lunch and spa treatments, which many of them have never done before. Variety and being able to share our events, as we feature specific times for the spouses to be together time for the heroes in the field, and couples and community time. Both the Heroes and their spouses share invaluable information with one another. After Jim’s passing, I wanted to continue in his footsteps, and hosted three couples in 2014. With a great deal of support from an amazing local community, it has been such an amazing adventure. I feel so blessed to be able to do this and have made some amazing friends along the way. In 2015 we changed from hosting the event at Williamburg Horse midway to our property in Paints, Bear Hill Farm and Hunt Club. Jim’s dream came true!

What has been the biggest benefit for you since becoming involved with WWVA?

Hosting this WWVA event has become the passion in my life. It is a chance to honor and respect what these Purple Heart recipients and their wives have sacrificed for each of us. To see so many wounded, wounded, great camaraderie and how friendships made for an amazing gift. It is an honor to see so many of them “walking in as strangers and leaving as best friends” between the two days they arrive on Friday and leave on Monday. Many who have come (mainly Vietnam) did not really believe they should be here but thanked God that they were. Many did not share their experiences during the event but when they returned home, they shared their hours with family and friends. Even some of the wives who attended our event independently, left grateful that they came. We have been grateful to hear that our couples event has enhanced relationships. Some of the Heroes and their spouses have asked us “why are you doing this for me, I don’t deserve it.” My response is always, “you observe this and so much more!” I am thankful for the remarkable support this event receives from so many local individuals and businesses and feel so happy to be in such a patriotic community. There is nothing quite as moving as reading the testimonial of the Heroes and the spouses who share how this event has enriched their lives and given them hope for a better tomorrow. The tears shed when the Purple Heart children of their combat to our Farewell dinner on Sunday night is incredibly humbling, and the look on the wives faces when the bar owner comes to grab us up for our wine bus is priceless!! I have been blessed to help others start their own WWVA events and if anyone needs my help regarding this, please let me know.

Sponsors and Friends

We would like to express our sincere appreciation and gratitude to the following supporters for their graciously contributions and dedication to WWVA and our Heroes.

THANK YOU!

Donations:

James Eastman: $5,000
Thomas Shollin: $800
Kyle Swanson: $600
Towerwood Social Club (in coordination with Jay Bird & Trish): $599

Donations toward 5th Annual NY Kuneytown FLX Ducks & Bucks:
Kuneytown Sportsmen Club Banquet: $10,000
Waste Connections: $650

Donations toward Camp Hackett:
Wurl-Feind-Ingman VFW Post 2687: $1,000

Donations toward 2nd Annual Long Leaf AL Whitetail & Quail Hunt:
Baldwin Pole: $1,000

Donations toward 8th Annual SW Ohio Duck Hunt:
Safari Club International SW Ohio Chapter: $3,500

Donations toward 4th Annual Newfield Deer Hunt:
Raymond E. Whalte: $1,500

Donations toward 4th Annual Eagle River Muskie:
James and Shawn Stemper: $1,400

Donations toward Mercer Muskie Madness:
Gateway Lodge / Host Wayne Reibe: $4,815

Hides for Heroes:
Waupaca Foundry Inc.: $674

Thank You, Misty River Silver Labs!

Please join us in welcoming the newest member of the WWA family, "Steel"! Steel is a beautiful Silver Lab from Misty River Silver Labs in Clifton, Kansas. A huge THANK YOU to Tom Cody of Misty River Labs for donating this beautiful puppy to our very own WWA hero and Guide, John Kinney, in Dawsonville, GA. It was Tom's wish to donate one of his pups to Wounded Warriors in Action because he knows what the Foundation does and wants to help WWA in our mission to keep healing and recovering our combat wounded Warriors.

Additional thanks and gratitude to Aaron Edelt and Jaciie Kyle for helping raise her. John plans on teaching Steel for waterfowl hunting and bringing him on many Bulls WWA events. John and his family will be forever grateful for the opportunity to raise another gun dog and watch him work on behalf of our Heroes. Thank you, Tom Cody and Misty River Labs for such a thoughtful donation and for your outstanding support of WWA and our Purple Heart Heroes.
Ozarks Christian Academy Fundraises for WWIA!

Students at Ozarks Christian Academy recently participated in a casual dress day where students are allowed to wear non-uniform attire if they pay $1 per piece. Proceeds are then donated to a selected charity. WWIA is honored to have been selected as the recipient of OC’s fundraiser and we sincerely thank all of the faculty and students for their tremendous support of WWIA and our Purple Heart heroes.

Help Our Heroes with Hero Miles!

Fisher House has been a phenomenal supporter of WWIA and our heroes, donating flights to and from many of our events for our combat-wounded veterans. Those flights are made possible through frequent flyer mile donations made by individual airline passengers. If you would like to donate some of your own frequent flyer miles toward this amazing cause, visit Fisher House online at www.fisherhouse.org to learn more and see how you can help!

Help Support WWIA Through Vehicle Donation!

You can help support WWIA and our heroes by donating your car, truck, van, SUV, boat, motorcycles, ATV, RV, trailer or airplane. Y-Div recently joined the CARS team to help continue providing opportunities to support non-profits through vehicle donations. You will still work with the same outstanding representatives that you have come to trust with your donation needs. Simply click here to start the donation process or call CARS toll-free at 855-590-REDE (855-590-7433) to have a donation staff specialist help guide you through the donation process. If you would like to learn more about how the CARS vehicle donation program works, please click here. We thank you in advance for your support!

DONATE YOUR MILES TO AN AMAZING CAUSE!

www.fisherhouse.org

Help support WWIA by donating cars, trucks, motorcycles, RV’s, boats, airplanes, heavy equipment, farm machinery, etc. (running or not) to CARS.

CARS
Moving Forward Together
Want to learn more about WWIA, visit us online!

VISIT US TODAY!
WWIAF.ORG

Our website is full of information about who we are, how we serve our Purple Heart Heroes, and how you can get involved! Visit us today! Click Here!

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