



Marsh duck hunt forges bond between community, veterans



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DAILY CITIZEN

HORICON | A morning on a boat with a dog named Tucker, warm chili and cold beer, duck to put in the freezer for Christmas dinner — this is how Kari Voy likes to say thank you to service members that have put their lives on the line.

"All weekend they're 'Thank you, thank you,'" she said. "I keep saying, 'No, no, no, stop. This is how we say thank you to you. I get to do this work because of what you did for me.' Our only goal is to spoil them completely rotten for an entire weekend."

This year, 28 veterans, 27 guides and a gaggle of hunting dogs took part in the hunting event held by the Horicon Marsh Wounded Warriors group. Many veterans arrived Friday and stayed through Sunday to get in one and a half days of duck hunting on the marsh.

"We got lucky we found some really good contacts inside the VA that help us find our

veterans," Voy said.

This is the fourth year that the group has hosted veterans. In 2010 the event started out with 15 active duty and veterans from Wisconsin and Illinois. This year they hosted veterans from as far away as Arkansas.

"A lot of them are now coming back year after year, which is really cool," Voy said. "

That's definitely the case for Ryan Baudhuin of New Berlin, a U.S. Marine veteran.

"This is my third year," he said. "The first year I was invited as a whim, sat down with Chuck (Dodge) and Ryan (Voy) afterwards and said 'I want to get involved. This is a great thing you guys got here.'"

Baudhuin, a VA employee and avid hunter, has been spreading the good word about the hunt to other friends and co-workers over the years.

"I've got veteran friends from my service time and I work at the VA, some of my co-workers came that are vets," Baudhuin said. "Through networking I've brought them a bunch of people. I just want to keep making it bigger and bigger."

Each year the committee of approximately 10 people starts planning in April for food, logistics and lodging.

IAW Union Hall was donated to host all of the veterans coming from further distances and Johnson Buses donated a bus to transport them from the hall to the hunt site. Quad Graphics also helped in discounting the food purchased for the event. Voy said involving the community and business owner's expertise was instrumental in organizing the event.

"A lot of it was trusting in the local people that know what they're doing," Voy said.

She's been happy with the amount of growth the event has had over the last four years.

"The list of volunteer guides just doesn't seem to end," Voy said. "Our goal is to go up just a little bit more each year."

Overall, the hunt is a success for both a community wanting to support veterans and veterans seeing how a community supports its troops.

"I look at it both ways," Baudhuin said. "These people are giving back to the vets but seeing a community like this come together and make something like this happen, that's really cool to me."