

From the Desk of the Director

I am often asked by people with different lifestyles about my passion for hunting. They are curious about why I hunt. For me there are a number of reasons. Of course, there is the thrill - the anticipation of the time in the field and the adrenaline rush of a successful hunt. But it is more than that. Hunting is a camaraderie between friends and family. It's even a stress reliever. Sitting silently in the woods is an opportunity to connect with the land. Those quiet moments are a therapy that soothes my spirit.

Hunting has been around since people first lived on the land - from the early people seeking food to the recreation of more recent years. However, the numbers of people hunting have declined. A decade ago 10% of the population hunted. Today it is less than 7%, and it is anticipated to drop to 3.5% by 2026.

Hunting is often a family tradition. I know it is for me. I had the privilege to hunt pheasants in South Dakota with my grandfather. Thirty years later, I remember the time spent vividly. Now, I pass that experience along to my son and daughter and enjoy every minute I spend with them. I hope, one day, to be able to share this tradition with my grandchildren as well. I find that time spent in the outdoors makes the most lasting memories.

These days time constraints often stand in the way of enjoying the hunting experience. There are many single family homes, and in many other homes it takes two incomes to raise a family. Conservation agencies are attempting to help with this hurdle.

In the last 5-10 years, the Iowa DNR has opened youth seasons to allow young people the opportunity to hunt pheasant, deer and waterfowl. Other seasons are set to allow disabled hunters to experience the joy of hunting without having to compete for space with others. National Archery in the School, Shooting Sports training with the DNR and 4-H organizations and other events are allowing young people the opportunity to experience hunting. The youth are finding that this is a lifelong hobby that can be done without precision athletic skills.

Special events such as the Special Youth Challenge Fundraiser event in Spencer in August raised \$17,000 for special needs hunting, and the Catch-A-Dream program provides individuals with a terminal illness the chance to experience hunting.

Local sporting organizations - Ducks Unlimited, Pheasants Forever and the O'Brien County Sportsmans Club - help to spark the interest of youth as they explore the outdoors.

They realize that if people are not introduced to the sport when they are young they will not take part in it when they are older. Hunters need to step forward and arrange to take youth from single families or people with special needs out on a hunt. If this isn't possible, consider contributing to an organization which will make this happen.



Take your kids hunting ... and you won't have to hunt for your kids!!

Terry Boltjes, Director

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