

## Differently-abled hunters go for bears

Jim Huckabay Contributing columnist  
Jun 13, 2014

---

This is a story of two 14-year-olds — one boy and one girl — whose families opted to get them as far into deep-forest bear hunting as possible. At one level, they are just ordinary youngsters who want to hunt and fish and bathe in fresh air and sunshine like any other kid. At another level — the one involving wheelchairs, shooting skills, a little extra help and steadfast determination reflected in huge smiles — Amy Moore and Dariece Steele are anything but ordinary.

Of course, this is also about Youth Outdoors Unlimited (Y.O.U.). You met founders Cindy and Joe Carpenter a few months ago, who drove over on a Monday evening from Moses Lake. That monthly meeting of the Kittitas County Field & Stream Club was about celebrating 95 years of working for the outdoor future of Paradise.

We talked a bit about the Club's proposed Washington Kids (that means all kids) Outdoor Bill of Rights: "The children of Washington have the right to discover and experience the outdoors through activities including the following: Create an outdoor adventure; Explore a trail; Camp under the stars; Go fishing; Discover nature; Explore Washington's heritage; Go on a picnic; Play in a park, in the water, in the snow, on the rocks; Go hunting; Learn to be safe around firearms and other outdoor tools."

Cindy and Joe updated us on their Y.O.U. program, a tax exempt 501(c)3 corporation focused on making hunting and fishing dreams come true for young people diagnosed with life-threatening illness and/or physical disability. In less than a

handful of years, the program has thrown the outdoors wide open for dozens of kids who really need to taste life with fewer limits.

As of that evening, a dozen youngsters were in the pipeline for 2014 camping, hunting or fishing trips. Fishing trips are tailored for the kids wanting them — from warm water spiny-rays to salmon over 30 pounds. Hunting is most commonly for turkeys, white-tail or mule deer or bears. Fish or game harvested is carefully processed for the table and the trophy is mounted. Each hunter or fisher gets a photo record of their big adventure. Whatever special clothing, custom-fitted gear or chair or firearm required or needed is provided by the program and its sponsors.

Funding is from banquets, fundraisers and generous sponsors who also provide products to move the program forward. Sponsors include Sportsman's Warehouse, Cabela's, Wholesale Sports Outdoor Outfitters, Vortex Optics, Gunwerks, Brothers 'N Arms and several handfuls of custom clothing or equipment manufacturers. Through it all, the staff and editors of Horns & Hooks Magazine have been elbow to elbow with Joe and Cindy and Y.O.U.

At any rate, in the last couple months, two of the dozen youngsters — Dariece and Amy — have been on successful black bear hunts.

Dariece Steele was born with spina bifida — not a big enough bump in the road to keep him from his black bear appointment. With his folks, Gary and Sue, his brother Devan and sister Dacia, he made the journey from home in Olympia to the Quinault Reservation north of Ocean Shores. There, they met Tandy Charley, Dariece's Quinault bear guide. They also hooked up with Y.O.U. guide Rex Peterson and cinematographer Jeff Berg, both with Horns and Hooks Magazine. On the Quinault ground, they became familiar with the country and the new Y.O.U. camo "track chair" which, if needed, would get Dariece into places his normal chair might not. The 14-year-old demonstrated his shooting skill on a couple targets, they all played on the beach 'til dark, then turned in to rest up for the hunt.

There are a lot of bears in the dense Quinault forests. Late on the third day in those woods, the right bear came to them. Dariece made a perfect shot. His family is enjoying some of the finest meat Washington has to offer and Dariece is looking forward to seeing the shoulder mount being prepared for him by God's Creation Taxidermy.

Not long after Dariece made his hunt, Amy (who suffers from the chromosome disorder known as Turners Syndrome) embarked on her great bear hunting adventure. On the Willow River of British Columbia, this 14-year-old demonstrated her own coolness under pressure and took another beautiful spring black bear.

Thus begins another year of helping youngsters see new possibilities as abled outdoor people. Fishing, camping and fall hunting are now lining up for the rest of the young people awaiting their 2014 adventures.

Y.O.U. makes bigger openings into the outdoors. Check out [www.youthoutdoorsu.org](http://www.youthoutdoorsu.org).

Jim Huckabay is retired from the Department of Geography at Central and is the author of "WILD WINDS and Other Tales of Growing Up in the Outdoor West." Contact Jim and join in the discussion of this and other columns at [www.insidetheoutdoors.com](http://www.insidetheoutdoors.com).

---

Ricki Towner