

Wednesday, Jan. 7, 2015

THE KARNES COUNTYWIDE

Karnes' County Newspaper

Residents host special hunt for wounded vets



Contributed photo Pictured here are hosts and participants in a recent hunt for wounded vets. (Standing) Iraq/Afghanistan War veteran SGT Bain Serna, (seated left to right) wounded Iraq/Afghanistan War veterans SSGT Jeremiah Leach, SGT Matt Krumwiede, SGT Hubert Gonzales, SGT Justin Pullin, SFC John Faulkenberry. (Kneeling) Jim Guidry (left) and Randy Pawelek.



Joe Baker photo From left, Randy Pawelek, Bain Serna and others who contributed to a special hunt for wounded veterans look out across a pasture at the Pawelek Ranch as a cool front arrives midway through the hunt on Dec. 27

KARNES COUNTY – A site encompassing hundreds of acres of pristine Texas countryside was the tranquil place where five wounded veterans of the Iraq and Afghanistan Wars were treated to a weekend extravaganza of hunting and camaraderie on Dec. 26-28, with volunteers from Karnes County and beyond all working together to honor and serve the military heroes.

For the second consecutive year, Randy and Debbie Pawelek opened up their 877-acre ranch, located on the Karnes and Goliad County lines between Charco and Choate, to host wounded combat veterans that have been receiving treatment at Brooke Army Medical Center.

The four soldiers and one Marine on the hunt were SGT Hubert Gonzales, SFC John Faulkenberry, SGT Justin Pullin, SSGT Jeremiah Leach, and SGT Matt Krumwiede.

“My heart is heavy for these young men who’ve sacrificed so much,” said Debbie Pawelek. “I’m old enough to be their mom and can’t imagine my own child having to go through all the surgeries and months of rehabilitation that these boys are going through, all because they chose to serve our great country. Providing them a place to get away for a weekend is very menial compared to everything each of them and their families are dealing with.”

The collective and team efforts of the community provided the veterans with hearty home-style meals for breakfast, lunch and dinner, made from scratch and served by the volunteers. A wide variety of snacks and drinks were available around the clock to the veterans to feast to their appetite’s content.

Generous donations and contributions were also made to give the veterans each gifts that included new shotguns, among other items. Then veterans then tested out their new hardware with a fun skeet shooting session that had the warriors and volunteers all smiles.

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Joe Baker photo Youth volunteers move an ATV used in the special hunting weekend for wounded veterans.



Joe Baker photo Hay bales painted in red, white, and blue welcome wounded veterans to a special hunt at the Pawelek Ranch located near the Karnes-Goliad County Line.

“My family and I are humbled to be able to do this for these rehabilitating soldiers,” said Randy Pawelek. “Having all our friends and neighbors come out and make this hunt happen is phenomenal. We could not do this alone. During this time of year, everyone is spending it with their family, so I was amazed with all the support. I’m proud to live among these folks.”

The hunt itself was a success as the veterans hunted in the early morning hours and also at sunset, harvesting deer and getting to spend quality time and fellowship together in the deer blinds in the great Texas outdoors.

“This weekend was an amazing opportunity to interact with an incredible group of people,” said Sergeant First Class John Faulkenberry, one of the five war veterans who is also a leader in the Military Warrior Support Foundation, an advocacy and support organization for wounded combat veterans. “We formed an immediate friendship that will last forever. Randy Pawelek provided a life changing experience for these young men that have dedicated their service to this great nation.”

Karnes County youth were on hand at the hunt, volunteering in various capacities and interacting with the combat veterans and getting a chance to hear their personal stories of courage and perseverance after getting injured in warfare.

“I believe as an American citizen that it’s only right to help our wounded veterans in any way we can,” said Jeremiah Corey, a Falls City High School senior who has enlisted as an infantryman in the Marine Corps and will ship off to basic training this summer. “They sacrificed so much for us. The hunt was the least we could do and is a small thank you for what they did. I am glad I was able to go and help out, and also glad that a lot of other people helped out in the ways they did. Learning the veterans’ stories was a great idea, as it gives them a chance to be heard and tells us a little of what they went through.”

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Randy and Debbie Pawelek expressed thank to the following for their help with the event:

Military Warrior Support Foundation

Funds for gifts to veterans: MMR Group Employees (Ingleside, TX)

Monetary contributions towards food, beverages, and supplies: Geneva Smedley, Roger and Faris Overby, Mr. and Mrs. Monroe Sickenius, and Mr. and Mrs. Joshua Wadsworth

Preparation, cooking and serving meals for the entire weekend: Panna Maria Men's Club (Garret Dragon, Ben and Kristi Janysek, Patrick Janysek, Anthony Kruciak, Leo Moczygamba, Michael and Karla Moczygamba, Jeremy Swierc, and Vincent Swierc), Jordan Buehring and Tony Krawietz;

Ice, bottled water & soft drinks: Encana Corporation (Panna Maria, TX)

Ice: 4M Whitetails (Gillett)

Hunting Guides: Travis Ehrlich, Juan Gonzales, Raymond Jenkins, Gary Klides, Sean O'Brien, and Joshua Wadsworth

Cajun Gumbo Preparation: Mack Rabelais and Willie Metz (drove all the way from from Lafayette, Louisiana)