



## A Sneak Peek into the 7<sup>th</sup> Annual Veterans Hunt

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Our Veterans provide a depth of service that can be difficult to comprehend. They give up years of their lives to serve our country. Their sacrifice affects U.S. citizens now, and generations to come. As citizens of the U.S., we have a calling to display gratitude for everything our Veterans have done. Pheasants Forever answered that call to action 7 years ago when they held the first annual Veterans Hunt. Since 2013, we hosted 6 annual Veterans Hunts. This year was our 7<sup>th</sup> hunt and over three days, Pheasants Forever hosted a total of 305 Veterans. The Hunt is always unforgettable.

This year, Pheasants Forever honored our Veterans with a fantastic event, including free delicious food, an unforgettable hunt, and quality service.

Delicious food is an important aspect of an exceptional experience. When a good meal is involved, you can expect satisfied smiles to follow. So, whenever the Veterans please, they are free to come inside the Delp Lodge and enjoy a variety of food. At all times they are provided with coffee, tea, doughnuts, cookies, soda, and water. In the late morning, at around 10:30, the catered food arrives. Veterans are free to grab lunch whenever they'd like. One of the best parts about the provided meal is that it is free to the Veterans because of the generous donations we receive throughout the year. A Veteran, Paul Effinger, who served in Vietnam expressed, "This is the first event I've been to where I haven't had to pay money." Pheasants Forever is proud to say no money exchanges hands at the Veterans Hunt. Delectable, free, food is just one influencing aspect that makes the Veterans hunt amazing.

An impactful hunt is crucial to ensure the Veterans have a marvelous time. Each wave of Veterans flooded into the grounds and registered upon arrival. All the Veterans were greeted with kindness upon checking in, creating the first positive interaction of the day. An adequate hunting spot is critical to ensure a satisfactory hunt. John Delp generously donated his hunting grounds in support of our veterans. The beautiful view can only add to the enjoyment of the hunt. On the first snowy day, the grounds were beautiful, glistening with the white fluff. On the second and third day, the snow was gone, and the sun poked out, exposing the gorgeous views under the shining sun. A WWII veteran attended the hunt this year which caused huge excitement. I interviewed the WWII veteran, Daniel Bish, age 98 about his hunt. "It was my first time, and I enjoyed it!" he stated. Another man named Garry McLaughlin, who served in Vietnam from 1964-1969, shared his experience. His fifth time attending the hunt, Garry shared about how all the men in his hunt split the birds, so everyone went home with something. "If I get a pheasant, great. If I don't that's fine too. It's always a good time." Positive interactions and beautiful grounds make the hunting experience phenomenal.

The final aspect of our fantastic event is the quality of service the veterans receive. 30



adult volunteers, 19 student volunteers, and 30 dog handlers sacrificed their time to serve. Some people worked the registration tent, others drove veterans down to their hunt, and some were around to tackle any task that arose. Dog handlers volunteered their time to work their dogs in the field, scaring up birds so the veterans could shoot. I worked inside the lodge, where we restocked drinks, wiped tables, rolled silverware, served food, etc. We made sure the Veterans were taken care of and we got to talk to them as we served food. I enjoyed asking them how the hunt went and if they got anything. I got various answers, but almost everyone ended their hunting tales with "They had a blast" (pun intended!) The veterans expressed how thankful they were to be

at the event. It was heartwarming to see how much they appreciated the hunt. A depth of satisfaction filled my heart as I saw the veterans having an enjoyable day. I know all of the volunteers were happy they got to play a part in that, wherever they volunteered that day. Volunteers giving their time to joyfully serve our Veterans made the 7<sup>th</sup> annual Veterans Hunt phenomenal.

Pheasants Forever serves out veterans proudly, one hunt at a time. Free, fantastic food, quality service, and a good hunting experience are just a few aspects that make our Veterans Hunt a phenomenal event. While it is a huge undertaking with a lot of moving parts, we are ecstatic to be a part of one of the biggest Veteran hunts in the country.