



TOP

Helping Those Who Served The Nation

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Helping Those Who Served The Nation

*By Annabeth Miller
ShowMe Times Editor*

They have served the nation – helping preserve the freedoms and liberties that are so often taken for granted. Many served overseas in harm’s way. And they now are disabled – confined to wheelchairs, walking with artificial limbs, walking with canes or crutches. Their access to many things once enjoyed – such as hunting, fishing, enjoying the outdoors – has been restricted by their physical handicapped.

But now a local veterans organization is taking a beautiful, rugged piece of Stoddard County land and equipping it with the modifications for access for area disabled veterans to enjoy and appreciate.

Tom Love and the Kenady-Hanks American Legion Post 59 in Dexter are taking Gobbler Ridge Ranch, and equipping it for hunting, fishing, and outdoor enjoyment by local disabled veterans. Just as these veterans' service was heroic, so too is the work the local American Legion and the sponsors of the project.

Gobbler Ridge is a rugged piece of rolling Crowley’s Ridge – with deep woods, hills and valleys, beautiful vistas, a pond for fishing. It’s been a family retreat – for hunting, family gatherings, and good times by the Love and Hedrick families.

“We decided to turn this into a disabled veterans facility,” To Love said on a recent visit to the ranch. “We are going to turn it into a place for hunting, wildlife viewing, just driving around and being out in nature. “

Love says he has talked to a number of veterans who tell him they don’t care what they do, the chance to get outdoors again is something they desire and need.

“Thanks to Kenady-Hanks Post 59, we have this project rolling and off the ground,” he said.

“The project” is making a rugged camp into a place that is handicapped accessible and conducive to hunting and other outdoor activities. Wheel chair ramps are being built to the furnish cabin on the grounds, and doorways and restrooms inside have been expended to accommodate wheelchairs.

Out on the property other accommodations are being made – including an elevated “blind” – a stand for hunting, wildlife viewing and photography, taking in the beautiful scenery. A well-designed ramp leads from the woods floor up to the elevated platform,

that will be sheltered and heated.

The vista from inside the stand is nothing short of stunning. A broad, beautiful valley rimmed with deep woods – perfect for turkey and deer and other wildlife.

“So far we have had good support,” Love said to a group of veterans and community supporters.

In addition to the physical improvements to the property, a number of food plots and habitat are being developed in a manner consistent to standards established by the Missouri Department of Conservation. Clover, wheat, beans, corn, milo, and chicory in addition to the natural grasses will all be planted to provided for diversified wildlife habitat.

“Southeast Coop has been wonderful,” he said. The agricultural coop has been assisting in the preparation of the wildlife food plots, providing seed and supplies. “I’ve just called and they’ve been here.”

“The veterans will have first priority,” he explained, with veterans in Stoddard County receiving first priority. “It is 100 percent for veterans any time they want it.”

The cabin will even be available for veterans group meetings.

Love explained the facility will be for Stoddard County veterans confined to wheelchairs or with a disability that restrict their mobility.

“We can never fully repay our veterans who have sacrificed so much for our freedom. However, we can offer a heartfelt ‘thank you’ by improving and maintaining the Disabled Veterans Wildlife Facility,” Love said.

Donations are tax deductible – and may be monetary or in the form of supplies and equipment for the project, or volunteer work.

For more information on the project and to learn how to make a donation, contact Tom Love at 573-820-0802 or the Kenady-Hanks American Legion Post 59.

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