



# First hunt far from ordinary

Twin brothers Jordan, center, and Jared Anderson enjoy the end of a successful first hunt along with their father, Dave.

## SENSE OF GRATITUDE PREVAILS AFTER SHARING IN AMAZING OUTING.

*Story and photos by Bill Hirt*

The picture in my mind is still vivid and it brings a smile to my face every time I think about it. I see the western sky fading as the day fast recedes into night. I hear the steady south wind rustling the leaves on the trees and the soft thud of acorns hitting the ground. I hear the nearly uncontrollable giggle of an excited teenage boy.

I see the muzzle blast and the barrel of a deer rifle jump. I hear the reassuring voice of our gracious host and landowner, Dave Draxler, saying, "He's down, he's down." Then, high-fives and congratulatory handshakes all around.

I have just witnessed an incredible ending to a very special hunt, with a young hunter bagging his first deer.

In any circumstances, this would be a major accomplishment for a young man on his first deer hunt. But what made this day even more special was that the young hunter involved this time had achieved this feat while sitting in a wheelchair.

I mention this not because he needs any sympathy, but just the opposite. I want people to realize how strong and capable this young man is.

### **Welcome opportunity**

It was Oct. 10, 2015, a Saturday and the first day of that year's youth deer hunt in Wisconsin. I was invited along on an afternoon outing with Draxler and Jerry Fuehrer, who were hosting brothers Jordan and Jared Anderson, their father Dave Anderson, and their uncle Russ Anderson. This was to be the 13-year-old twins' first deer hunt, something they had eagerly awaited.

I had first met the Anderson boys about six months earlier while helping with a hunter safety class led by my friend Patrice Eyers and sponsored by Mill Creek Education and Gun Club in Milladore, in central Wisconsin. Jordan and Jared both have physical disabilities, which they have overcome with excep-

tional determination, intelligence and enthusiasm. When I was offered the opportunity to come along on this hunt, I happily accepted.

We would all meet at Draxler's cabin in Marathon County at 2 p.m. Draxler, Jordan, Jordan's father and I would hunt the property where the cabin sits, while Fuehrer, Jared and Jared's uncle would hunt another property nearby. Draxler and Fuehrer had constructed custom-built hunting blinds that summer adjacent to likely deer-feeding areas, specifically for this hunt.

By 2:30, we were settled in at our assigned posts. It was a warm, breezy fall day. For the first few hours, an occasional squirrel or blue jay working busily to store acorns for the winter made up the extent of our wildlife viewing opportunities. We passed time with muffled chit-chat every now and again as we waited for that special last half hour of shooting light, when the woods become a much more active place.

### **Bag a buck**

Just as the sun was beginning to touch the horizon, I spied two deer, a doe and a fawn, stepping into the forest opening in front of our blind from the north. We waited quietly as the deer moved into clear view.

Ultimately, Jordan decided to pass on a shot, determined to make his first har-



**A specially built hunting blind provides the right venue for Jordan Anderson to scan for deer in the woods of Marathon County during his inaugural hunting outing in October 2015.**

vested deer a buck. As the western sky continued to fade, I thought to myself we might have made a mistake by not attempting to take that doe. Any first deer is a trophy and a prideful achievement in my mind.

Just then, with only a few minutes of shooting time left, Draxler spotted two more deer stepping out into the clearing. Upon inspecting them with binoculars, he declared they were both bucks.

Jordan, with a little assistance from his dad, took aim and pulled the trigger. He

bagged his first deer with one perfectly aimed shot.

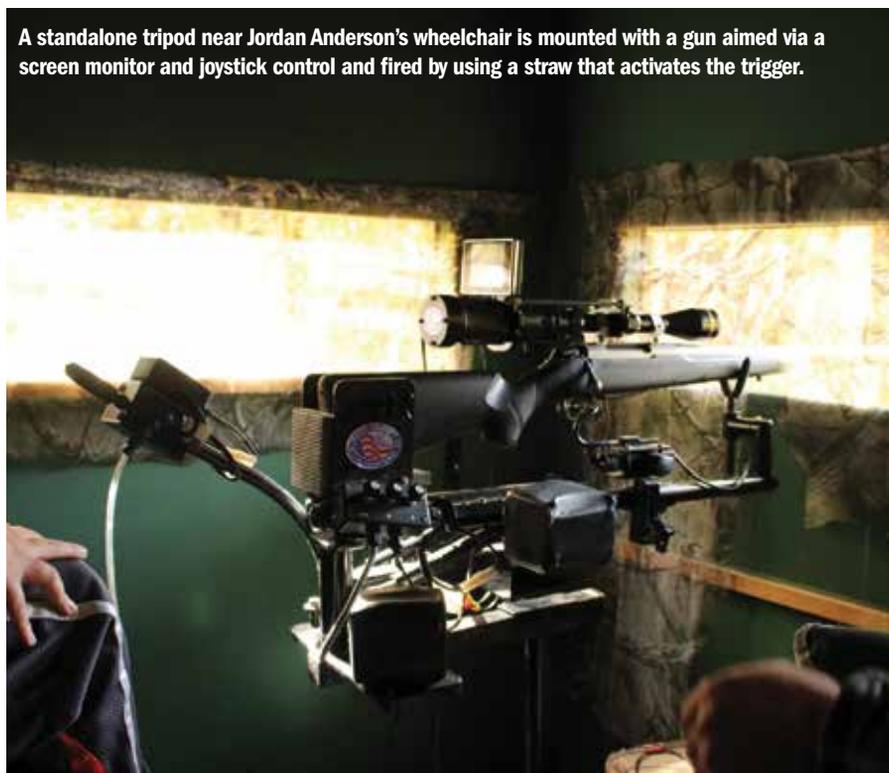
For this hunt, Jordan had his gun mounted near his wheelchair in a stand-alone electric tripod that is aimed with the help of a joystick controlled by one hand.

Jordan moves the joystick while watching a monitor that displays the view through the rifle's scope. When he is ready to shoot, he draws air through a straw that then pushes a piston-like device against the gun's trigger. Remarkable!

As for Jared, although he didn't get a shot that day, he saw lots of deer and had a great time.

These twin brothers are outstanding individuals, and I am so glad to have met them. I also am forever grateful for the opportunity to tag along on their first deer hunt, and I would like to thank Draxler and Fuehrer for their help in making this hunt possible. It is one I will never forget. 🍷

*Bill Hirt is a DNR wildlife technician at the Mead Wildlife Area in central Wisconsin.*



**A standalone tripod near Jordan Anderson's wheelchair is mounted with a gun aimed via a screen monitor and joystick control and fired by using a straw that activates the trigger.**

## >>> ADAPTIVE OUTDOORS

For information about DNR's "Open the Outdoors" programs for those with disabilities, including accessible hunting opportunities, rules and support organizations, go to [dnr.wi.gov](http://dnr.wi.gov) and search "Open the Outdoors."