



Alpen Optics Honors Injured Female Veterans During 2nd Celebration Hunt



Kate Calahan, Cheri Arnold, Vickie Gardner, Leslie Smith and Issac

Alpen Optics, along with Mississippi Outdoors, Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Prois, Fisheries and Parks and PVA-ORHF (Outdoor Recreation Heritage Fund) recently hosted a turkey hunt/fishing event for injured female veterans to "celebrate" these women and the sacrifices they've made for our country.

Vickie Gardner, co-owner of Alpen Optics, says, "I know how much being in the outdoors hunting and fishing means to me, and I knew that our returning female veterans would benefit from these activities as well. After spending time with the three special women during their first turkey hunting experience, I can say without a doubt that the hunt was healing and uplifting for not only them but everyone involved."

Gardner says she wants to make the media aware of this Celebration Hunt and solicits the media's help in raising awareness for female veterans, especially injured female vets and how hunting can provide a level of healing for them.

Veterans Leslie Smith, Kate Calahan and Cheri Arnold all suffer from debilitating injuries, but say that hunting and spending time in the outdoors provides them with a sense of empowerment and self-assurance that strengthens their spirits.

The participants enjoyed two days of hunting and fishing on the beautiful 8000-acre property owned by Mississippi Commissioner Billy DeViney; and two of the ladies ended up taking a bird.

After harvesting her first ever turkey, Smith, an amputee who's partially blind, said, "Hunting and taking this bird made me feel confident and powerful. I feel if I can do this, I can do anything."



Kate Calahan



Leslie Smith

Calahan, who's partially paralyzed, insisted on going after her gobbler on foot. She even climbed what she claimed were "two of the biggest hills in Mississippi" to get the job done.

"I began hunting a couple of years ago with the Paralyzed Veterans of America Organization," Calahan says. "I realized through hunting that I don't have to be stuck inside. I can do things. It's a great feeling."

Arnold, an incomplete quadriplegic, says hunting has opened up another world for her. Although she didn't get a bird, Arnold says, "I was thrilled to witness Leslie and Kate's excitement at getting a bird."

Arnold was the only lady to catch a fish during their afternoon fishing trips for bream and bass.

Gardner says, "The 2nd Celebration Hunt was a life changing experience for all of us. I look forward to future hunts and to meeting more remarkable women who've given so much of themselves to protect the freedom that we often take for granted."

For additional information on the hunt or for high res images, contact Stephanie Mallory at stephanie@mallorycommunicationsinc.com.

For more information on Alpen Optics, check out www.alpenoptics.com.



Cheri Arnold



Kate Calahan



Leslie Smith