



NEWS RELEASE: Thursday October 20, 2016

Contact: Brenda Hartkopf, Minnesota Elk Breeders Association, 320-543-2686

U.S. Navy Veteran Harvests Bull Elk

Minnesota Elk Breeders Association (MnEBA), October 20, 2016 – Each of the past 10 years, MnEBA has selected a special individual with Minnesota ties, to harvest a majestic bull elk in the beautiful Lake of the Woods area of northern Minnesota. In most years, this has been a disabled veteran of the U.S. military. But this is the first year a female recipient has been chosen for this once in a lifetime opportunity which recently took place on October 10-11, 2016.

Eileen Vasquez served in the United States Navy from February 1998 – April 2004 where she worked as a Nuclear Machinist Mate. Her ship, the USS Enterprise, was part of the first battle group to respond to the terror attacks of September 11, 2001. During her time in service, Eileen became visually impaired due to radiation damage while working as a nuclear mechanic and thus, was medically discharged. Eileen is married to fellow Navy veteran Jon Vasquez, who sustained a traumatic brain injury during his time in service. While Eileen has lived in Duluth, the Iron Range, and Coon Rapids, she and her husband currently live in St. Paul, Minnesota.

In the true spirit of coming back from adversity, Eileen is making the most of her time with the limited eyesight she still has, which is slowly diminishing. She has since completed her college education and is the owner of Locavore Thyme, a company in the St. Paul area which works to bring organic food to the marketplace. The title of her company, "Locavore" reflects the movement in recent years to eat locally sourced food. She is also active with the Regional Group of Blinded Veterans Association (BVA) who work to bring together local blind and visually impaired veterans, their friends, family and community to improve the quality of life for all impaired veterans experiencing vision issues. Eileen has also served as a national BVA Field Service Officer for Region 6 North. An avid hunter, she has also been involved with several disabled veteran hunts.

Not surprisingly, Eileen was the first hunt recipient to find her prey a mere 94 yards away by noon of the first day of her hunt on a beautiful October day. She took three shots before the elk collapsed on the edge of the woods, just a few yards from where it was first spotted. Eileen says, "I had practiced at 100 yards before the hunt so it couldn't have worked out more perfectly."

She and her husband took the meat home to be processed locally and are planning to donate some of her harvest to a local DAV game feed so other veterans can enjoy a delicious meal featuring elk as well. Eileen was excited about her recent experience and thanked everyone involved in this special project saying, "Thank you for this great opportunity, I appreciate it very much!"

MnEBA would like to thank everyone who generously supported this year's project including Tony's Trophy Elk Hunt Ranch, Midwest Outdoors Unlimited, Lake Superior Chapter of Safari Club International (SCI), Splendor Ridge Elk Farm and White Rump Acres.

MnEBA offers our heartfelt thanks, support and gratitude to Eileen and her husband Jon, and to all United States military men and women for their service to our country.



U.S. Navy Veteran Eileen Vasquez with husband Jon (back left) and Tony Beckel (hunt guide).