

ISSUE 5 - MAY 2025

THE TRACKER

MICHIGAN CHAPTER SCI

2025
CONVENTION
52 ISSUE

TOM
FOOLERY

LIBERTY
HUNT

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SCI'S PURPOSE AND INTENT

- A. To promote good fellowship among all who love the outdoors and hunting.
- B. To promote conservation of the world's renewable wildlife resources, recognizing hunting as one of the many management tools.
- C. To educate youth, sportsmen and the public in conservation of our wildlife and our forests, which are our natural heritage.
- D. To share our hunting experiences and information among our membership.
- E. To operate the association as a non-profit organization, consistent with its charitable purposes, while providing enjoyment for our members, always with the goal of helping to conserve the animals that we love to hunt today for those who will come to love the sport tomorrow.

SCI'S CODES OF ETHICS

Recognizing my responsibilities to wildlife, habitat and future generations, I pledge:

- A. To conduct myself in the field so as to make a positive contribution to wildlife and ecosystems.
- B. To improve my skills as a woodsman and marksman to ensure humane harvesting of wildlife.
- C. To comply with all game laws in the spirit of fair chase, and to influence my companions accordingly.
- D. To accept my responsibility to provide all possible assistance to game law enforcement officers.
- E. To waste no opportunity to teach young people the full meaning of this code of ethics.
- F. To reflect in word and behavior only credit upon the fraternity of sportsmen, and to demonstrate abiding respect for game, habitat and property where I am privileged to hunt.

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JUNE 2023 - MAY 2024

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Sables:

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16 LIBERTY HUNT

This hunt, as most do, began it actually started much earlier! It started about 7 years ago! It's a chance to go on a youth hunt at Hats Ranch in MI.



32 SCI CONVENTION RECAP



EDITOR'S NOTES



Welcome to the Spring issue of the Tracker. By the time you're reading this, April showers will have transitioned to May flowers. Turkey season will be about half over and many of us will be working on food plots and habitat improvements on our hunting properties.

In this issue we celebrate another great fundraiser convention. A great time was had by all, but most importantly we raised more money for conservation, hunter's rights advocacy, and for the promotion of hunting! These funds make a difference right here in West Michigan, but also throughout our state, our nation, and across the world. **THANK YOU** to each one who made the fundraiser a great success.

In this issue you'll find a great story, by Greg Kurdys, about a mountain lion hunt and a Liberty hunt recollection by Jim Novitsky. Thanks Greg and Jim for your contributions to this issue! Check out the member trophy photos and some perfectly timed trail cam photos. We'd love to see your trophy photos and unique trail cam photos. We are also always interested in your hunting stories. Did you go on a trip of a lifetime or have an exceptional hunt here at home? Write a story about it, or if writing isn't your thing, give me a call and we can get it done together.

In this issue we also have updates on the many activities and events of the Michigan Chapter. Stay up to date and enjoy.

Please note that we do reserve the right, in our sole discretion, to edit or refuse any submission. If you would like to submit an article or pictures, please send them to me at: trmoelker@gmail.com or 5132 20th Ave Hudsonville, MI 49426 or call me at 616-889-1003.

Thank you,

Todd Moelker, Editor



22

TOM FOOLERY

I aligned the crosshairs of the scope on the .308 just to the right of a branch that was obstructing the front of the lion's shoulder only sixty feet away.



PREZ SEZ

Thank you to everyone who made our fundraiser a success! Below is a list of projects we supported last year:

WHERE YOUR MONEY GOES!

\$41,067 SCI Wildlife Conservation & Hunter Right Support

\$20,000 Ivan Carter Wildlife Conservation Alliance

\$7,500 Guiding Influence

\$7,000 Quest Ministries

\$6,500 Powderhorn Charters - youth fishing charters

\$6,368 Colorado Wildlife Deserve Better – WE WON against the anti's!!!

\$5,800 MOOD TV

\$5,000 MSU Conservation Class - SCI MIC

\$5,000 Hunt 2 Heal

\$3,500 Outdoor Discovery Center

\$3,845 Youth Pheasant Hunt

\$3,000 Best Outdoors – in conjunction with Hunt 2 Heal

\$2,000 JD Vance Video with Ruthless TV

\$1,500 First Time Hunter Pledge

\$1,500 Michigan Ad - SCI MIC

\$1,500 2024 Support Donation - SCI MIC

\$500 Grad Grant - SCI MIC

\$500 Kent County Orange Crushers

\$150 Sportsmen for Youth Placemat Program

GRAND TOTAL

\$122,230

With our core mission to Preserve, Protect, and Promote hunting, there are many more projects we would like to support. The more funds we can raise, the bigger the difference we can make for hunting in our local and global destinations.

SCI representatives and I will be heading to Washington, D.C. in May to meet with lawmakers. Our goal is to represent hunters and show how big our voice can be! In order to do this effectively, we need more members. The bigger we are, the more influence we have.

Here is how you can help:

- 1. Ensure your membership is up to date**
- 2. Become a member or renew your membership**
- 3. Recruit your hunting friends to become members**
- 4. Volunteer to help at our events**
- 5. Sponsor events**
- 6. Find sponsors for our events**
- 7. Bid and buy at our fundraiser**

Thank you for helping us make a difference!

Dr. Michael Kwast

SCI Michigan President



ATTENTION SCI Michigan Members

Important information for our members such as chapter events, meetings and membership renewals will be emailed to every member that we have an email address for. If you didn't get an email reminder of our last meeting we do not have your email address. Please send your email to mvghareeb@gmail.com so we can get all of our emails on the list.

MICHIGAN CHAPTER UPCOMING EVENTS

Tuesday, April 29th Wild Game Dinner

The Red Bird Bistro & Grill

Thursday, May 8th

Member Dinner & Program

Wednesday, July 2nd

Member Night at the Whitecaps

Friday, August 8th

Member Challenge Shoot at Two Hats Ranch

Thursday, September 11th

Member Dinner & Program



SPONSORSHIP FEE SCHEDULE THE TRACKER MAGAZINE

1/8 Page

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1/4 Page

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1/2 Page

7 11/16" x 4 3/4" horizontal or

3 5/8" x 9 7/8" vertical

\$600.00 per year - same design full year

Full Page, Inside Front

or Back Cover

7 11/16" x 10 3/16"

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Billing cycle is January to January with sponsorship cost pro-rated for sponsorships starting during the year.

To submit material to The Tracker:

Write: Todd Moelker,

5132 20th Ave.,

Hudsonville, MI 49426

E-Mail: trmoelker@gmail.com

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The Tracker magazine is published by The Michigan Chapter of Safari Club International.

The Tracker magazine can be viewed on our official Michigan Chapter website by friends and nonmembers. website: www.scimichigan.org

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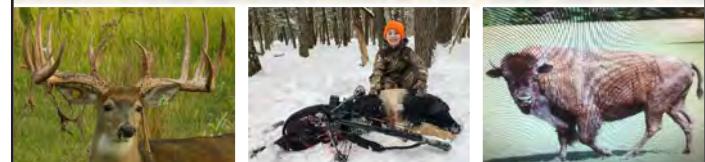
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We blew away
the 2024
numbers and
again set
another record.

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

STORY BY PETE MIEDEMA

Well, all we can say is thank you, thank you, thank you to the fantastic vendors, outfitters and especially you, our members and supporters, of the West Michigan Bowhunters “WMBH,” who made this special event meaningful.

After the 2024 WMBH Convention Fundraiser, we as a board, were ecstatic with the final numbers. We had set a record again.

Now for the fun part of our job. We get to figure out how best to spend the money raised-- money that you so generously entrusted to us.

We have already committed support to a local National Archery in the Schools “NASP” archery team of young people. They are an incredible example to others for their faith and commitment to witness and excellence. We will also be involved in hunter education training, middle and high school bass fishing teams, wounded warriors, and disabled youth programs.

Please always remember, Safari Club International’s primary mantra is “FIRST FOR HUNTERS.”

The West Michigan Bowhunters have been working hard to bring the great outdoors to more people and conserve wildlife habitats.





"IN CASE YOU BOOKED ANY CONVENTION HUNTS."

If you booked any hunts at recent conventions, you might wonder where to start and what to do next. Most African and New Zealand or Australian hunts will be taken during our summer, and the North American hunts next fall. If you are booking any hunt to take place yet this year, you are sure to go in the next 6 or 7 months, but if you booked for the next year, then you have much more time to think all these things through. If you bought a North American or New Zealand hunt, are you hunting deer or antelope-size species? Or will you be hunting elk, moose and red stag, which are much bigger? Now if you are going to Australia, they have some mighty big buffalo too! If you booked an African trip, what are you going to hunt? Perhaps a Cape Buffalo or any of the big five, then let's get the big stuff out of the way first. If you are fortunate enough to get to hunt Elephant, Rhino, Cape Buffalo, or Lion, you certainly need a large rifle. The legal minimum in most African countries is a .375 H&H magnum, but a .416 Remington or Rigby would be great, but the .458 Winchester or Lott is certainly applicable. If hunting plains game, which often includes kudu, gemsbok, warthogs, wildebeest, impala, and blesbok, etc., then any popular cartridge like a .270 Winchester on up is fine. Most folks just don't have a .458 Winchester or .416 Remington in their closet for a just-in-case hunt, so you really may need to go and buy one. Which one? Ah, I'm not touching

that one! There are plenty of out-of-the-box rifles that will do just fine, as well as custom guns costing many thousands of dollars. It's up to you and your budget. You do not need a large rifle for a leopard. What you do need is a rifle that you can shoot very well and hit a patch of leopard the size of a tennis ball every time. A great many leopards have been taken with the .270 Winchester and .30-06 Springfield class rifles, so there is no need for a big belted magnum cartridge for them. The most important fact for every animal you will hunt in the world is **NOTHING BEATS FIRST-SHOT BULLET**

PLACEMENT. So now on to that new rifle you think you need. Unless you are going to need to acquire a .458 Winchester or Lott or .416 Remington or Rigby, odds are that you have a .30-06 Springfield, 7mm Remington magnum, .300 Winchester magnum or .300 WSM, maybe even a .338 Winchester magnum in the gun cabinet somewhere. Just pick the one you like and take it. It doesn't matter if you are hunting African plains game, or any one of the North American elk, moose or caribou; these calibers will work just fine. There is no reason that they will not work well for New Zealand stags too. It does not matter if you buy factory ammo or reload your own, choose the heavier weights of bullets available for any given caliber. An example would be in the .30-06 Springfield or .300 magnums, to use at least 165-grain bullets rather than the 150-grain loads you have

been using on deer. In the 7mm magnums, use only 160-grain or 175-grain bullets and relegate those 140-grain loads to deer and antelope. As you can see, I am really trying to give this the K. I. S. S., (Keep It Simple Stupid), treatment. Now go out and practice, practice, and practice some more and this does not mean shoot off the bench either. Use your .22 cal. for a while and get used to shooting offhand, leaning against a tree, sitting and kneeling or off two- or three-legged sticks. When you decide what gun and ammo you are taking, take the time to

**RUN
EVERY
ROUND
THROUGH
YOUR
GUN**

Don't take it for granted that even your nice new factory ammo will function in your gun. What if you have that one odd shell? Just recently, I had a .375 H&H magnum cartridge that had a buggered rim and would not go under the extractor. Had I not taken time to run it through my gun, guess when it would have shown up? Oh well, I'm worth more dead than alive anyway. Also get yourself a copy of "The Perfect Shot" by Kevin Robertson, or even better, his DVD. These really show you where the vitals are on African game. All this may not be particularly related to reloading, but I assure you, that regardless of whether you use your own reloaded ammo or factory ammo, the precautions are the same. So enjoy the process of getting ready to go. It's at least half the fun and most of the work.

Feel free to write Terry at BlauwkampT@gmail.com anytime if I can help you.



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big BUCK night

STORY BY PETE VANDERARK

We had our most successful Big Buck Night event ever! Roughly 110 people were in attendance, and all had a great time! Thank you to Naber's Taxidermy for sponsoring this event! Jim, John, and Austin Naber were very busy scoring the “pile of racks” brought in by successful Michigan Chapter members.

Our Vice President, Stacey Platz, opened the evening with a reminder that our chapter Annual Fundraiser is February 7-8, 2025. Signing up early will save you some money.

Lee Murray led us in the Pledge of Allegiance followed by Jan Murray with prayer. After the pledge and prayer, we all enjoyed another great Stonewater dinner.

Allen Messing, a real estate agent with United Company Hunting Properties (UC Hunting Properties), presented an interesting program on property management. His program combines the love of hunting and land management as a potential income generating tool. He has unique insights and experiences understanding what a property can offer from an environmental and financial standpoint. Look him up if you are in the market for a hunting property and/or investment.

After Allen’s presentation, the moment of truth arrived to learn who won the four categories of the Big Buck contest. First off, Allen Messing won the guessing game. He was closest to the actual score—within 1/8 inch of the buck Naber’s brought with them. The youth winner for the biggest Michigan buck was Liam Koster, grandson of long-time chapter members Dave and Deb Koster. Katie Becker, daughter of loyal member and donor Tim Becker (Powderhorn Sportfishing Charters), had the biggest out of state youth buck. Vern Kuiper won the biggest Michigan buck with a beautiful buck from the Northern Lower Peninsula.





There were many great bucks entered, but one stood out from the crowd! Troy Baarman won biggest out of state buck with an absolute monster 203-inch typical, shot on day 8 of his hunt! Persistence paid off for Troy! The last big buck winner was Dale Grimes whose name was drawn for a prize from everyone who entered a buck.

But, we were not done with the winners just yet! Brian Becker won the youth rifle. Kendall Naber won the jewelry, which she thoughtfully said she would share with her mom. Mallory Mroz was the lucky winner of the Weatherby Vanguard in 300 Winchester Magnum.

It was great seeing so many members in attendance and to see all the successful hunters with their bucks!

Liberty Hunt

STORY BY JIM NOVITSKY

This hunt, as most do, began well before sunrise. But it actually started much earlier than most! In fact, it started about 7 years ago! It was at that time, I had the chance to go on a youth hunt with Denny Sprick at Two Hats Ranch in MI. I spent the day watching these young, first-time hunters having a great time enjoying the outdoors, while hoping for the thrill of getting their first deer. The day reminded me how special this pastime is to me, as well as many others, here in Michigan, and points beyond. I realized how lucky I am to have a place to spend fall days doing what I love. It spurred me on to get involved and sponsor a hunt.

Fast forward to 2021. I purchased land in the Big Rapids area. I had mentioned to Denny that I would like to sponsor a Liberty Hunt for deserving veterans now that I had a spot to host them. We worked on locating veterans to come out for a hunt. It took a bit longer than we thought, but persistence paid off.

A key element in our quest was meeting Russ Nehmer at our annual Michigan Safari Club convention in Muskegon, Michigan. Russ is a Special Forces Sergeant, a select member of an elite fighting force of the US Army.

He was severely injured in the line of duty, serving our country. Russ received a Purple Heart, Bronze Star, and a Meritorious Service Award. While adjusting to life post service, he unselfishly put together an organization called Warriors and Caregivers United, to help other wounded veterans reconnect and re-enter society. We enlisted his help in putting together a Liberty hunt.

Russ came out the following week to view my property and cabin, discussing details. We put together a plan. Russ started to recruit two hunters we would host in Big Rapids, MI. A drawing was held in July, and Michigan wounded warriors were chosen. Ryan Fabre of Grand Rapids and Eric Ritchie of Eaton Rapids were selected. Our chosen hunt weekend arrived. Guests arrived on Friday evening, September 13, 2024. We welcomed

our veterans and made introductions. My good friend, Tim Hansel, had agreed to guide one of the veterans. I would guide the other veteran. Denny Sprick joined us for the evening as well as Derek Zwiers, a neighbour and fellow veteran. Russ had put together backpacks with deer calls, snacks, hats, gloves, vests, knives, and a Safari Club pullover. After a great dinner and friendly conversation, we went to sleep and awoke on Saturday to begin our hunt.

We were greeted by a beautiful sunrise on the horizon with a misty fog covering the ground. As the sun made its way into the sky, the fog burned off, and we had the chance to see some deer. During the course of the morning, a few deer were sighted, but no shots were taken.

We headed back to the cabin for lunch and relaxation. Russ, Eric, and Ryan were such interesting men. Tim and I thoroughly enjoyed getting to know them.

We headed back out Saturday evening for our second hunt of the day. As the sun set, we had the opportunity to see some more deer, but no shots availed themselves. Once again, no deer were taken. Sunday morning was our last chance to get a deer, but alas, none were taken.

We met back at the cabin to pack up and say goodbye to our new friends. Russ brought along challenge coins that he presented to both hunters. Even though we did not have a deer hanging on the buck pole, as all Michigan hunters are aware, the thrill is in the hunt, not just the kill. Our veterans enjoyed the time spent outdoors, taking in the beauty and peacefulness of nature. A great time was had by all. As for me, I was honored to meet these two veterans, Ryan and Eric, for the first time, and getting to know Russ better. I was proud to host these fine gentlemen. It was a good reminder that we are free because of brave men like Eric, Ryan, and Russ. As the challenge coins say, "The Greatest Casualty Is Being Forgotten". Make it a priority to thank a veteran for their service and remember their sacrifices and accomplishments forever!







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SCI MICHIGAN CHAPTER

CHRISTMAS PARTY

Held on December 11, 2024

About 125 festive folks braved the blizzard like conditions and slippery roads to enjoy a Christmas celebration and we truly had a joyous time together.

Doors opened at 5PM with appetizers and the bar opening at 5:30PM. Santa and Mrs. Claus, the stars of the show, made their entry at 5:45. Santa and Mrs. Claus were busy with about 40 kids enjoying our Christmas celebration! After getting their pictures taken with Santa, the kids each got to choose a gift from a table overflowing with presents.

Our chapter president, Mike Kwast, made a few announcements and introduced Emmett, our new Tracker magazine design editor, from Grandville Printing. Emmett said a few words about his passion for design and the enjoyment he gets from helping us have an exceptional magazine. He also spoke about what he has learned about conservation and wildlife management since he began working on the Tracker. Mike picked back up with announcements including the great news of our hunter's rights/conservation victory in the blue state of Colorado! The cougar and bobcat hunting ban was soundly defeated! Victories like this are incredibly important and are only possible when we all work together to fight the anti-hunting crowd. We were reminded that our Fund Raiser Convention is right around the corner, (February 7 and 8). The fundraiser is designed to provide two days of entertainment and fun all with the goal of raising the funds needed to fight for hunters' rights and conservation. Once again there will be evening entertainment on Friday and Saturday nights. Reserving a room under our promo code eliminates the concern about driving in winter weather and also helps us get the lowest rate possible for the use of the convention center. The kids led us in the Pledge of Allegiance and Jim Naber offered prayer before we enjoyed another delicious dinner of roast beef, carved turkey, mashed potatoes and gravy, ginger glazed carrots and donuts for dessert. If you haven't joined us for a monthly member dinner at Stonewater, you really owe it to yourself to attend.

Besides the great company and cause the food is amazing! Sgt. Dave McKellar from Toys for Tots, standing in front of a table piled high with

donated toys, told us about the impact our toy donations have in thousands of children's lives. Dave is a disabled veteran and also thanked us for our humanitarian work in taking disabled veterans hunting.

The festivities concluded with our typical raffles, although there were two guns for the adults instead of just one, and three silent auction SCI Michigan clothing packages. Our lucky winners were:

Harrison Cook was the lucky winner of the youth gun.

Jack Weller made his mom happy by winning the jewellery raffle.

Ryan Poortenga was the first lucky winner for the adult guns and chose the Ruger 9mm pistol.

Nash Mascorro was the second lucky winner for the adult guns and won a Savage rifle in 6.5 PRC. Our January Dinner will be held on January 9. This will be big buck night! Bring your 2024 buck. There will be prizes for the following categories: Youth (each entry gets a prize), biggest Youth, Michigan, out of state, estate, and a drawing for a prize from all who entered their buck.





TOM FOOLERY

STORY BY GREG KURDYS

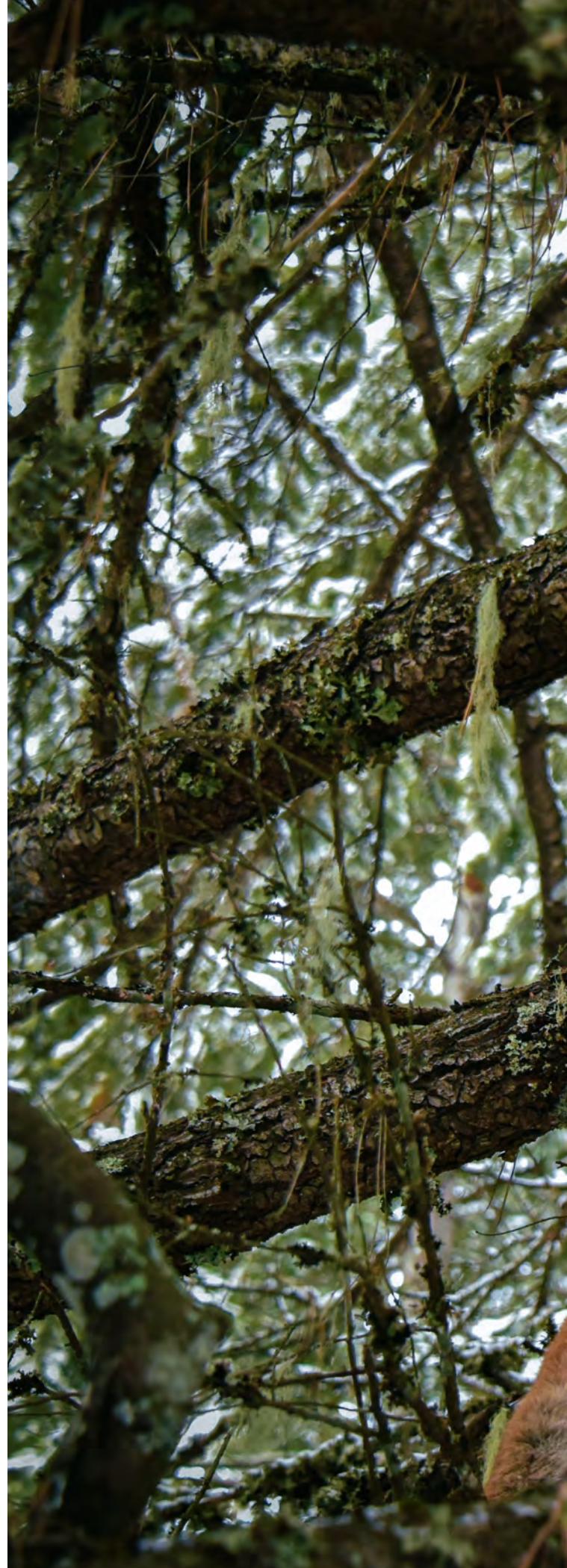
I aligned the crosshairs of the scope on the .308 just to the right of a branch that was obstructing the front of the lion's shoulder only sixty feet away. I checked with my guide to make sure the dogs were leashed. We were ready. When I squeezed the trigger,

I OBSERVED THE LION CARTWHEEL OUT OF THE TREE ALMOST IN SLOW MOTION.

The big tail rolled through the air like the tail of a kite. I felt the thud when its body hit the ground. Almost unbelievably the lion leapt to its feet and started running down the steep slope. Now what?

In December 2023, with my 69th birthday in the not-too-distant future, my spouse looked at me and asked if I had satisfied my hunting bucket list? Only a fool would pass up that opportunity! I scanned the room and observed there was nothing on the large Douglas fir beam across the room from the leopard. "A mountain lion would look great on that beam," I responded. She said that sounded like a great idea. I love my wife! After a bit of online research, I chose Linehan Outfitting in NW Montana. I contacted Tim Linehan. We had a good discussion regarding my physical abilities and his hunting area. His quota was full until the next season, so I booked a hunt for December 2024. Over the summer I put together a packing list and applied for the mountain lion tag.

I had originally planned to drive out and back, which adds a week to the trip. Then my daughter advised us their family would be joining us in mid-December. I did not want to miss any time with our grand kids, so I opted to travel by commercial airlines to Spokane, WA.





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would then rent a car to make the three-hour drive to Libby, MT. Tim's hunting area in very NW Montana lies on the western side of the Continental Divide. The conditions can vary from rain to subzero during lion season. Air travel meant limited room for baggage and the packing list needed to be refined. As the hunt neared, I monitored the weather forecast to determine which gear was most appropriate. One of the more difficult decisions was determining which firearm to take along. The problem was I had too many options! I made a call to Tim, and he made a few suggestions which narrowed the choices a bit. When all was said and done, I opted for my Kimber Montana in .325 WSM. It was simply the lightest centre fire rifle in my collection at just 7 lbs. with the scope.

A few days before my scheduled departure Tim called and asked if I could reschedule. With the wet weather forecast for the hunt week it would make tracking with the dogs very difficult. He wanted to make sure I had the best possible experience. I checked on the flights and determined the cost of rescheduling would not be unreasonable. I rescheduled for early January, which worked out well as my daughter's family returned home just before the hunt. The day before my departure Tim emailed me and noted that I did not need to bring a gun as I could use the guides. Given the difficulties in traveling with firearms, it was an easy call to take him up on that offer. The next day I flew to Spokane, WA. As often happens on my hunts, the checked bag did not make the connection through Atlanta to Spokane. Fortunately, I had planned an overnight stay on arrival and the bag arrived the next morning. I grabbed it at the airport and made the drive to Libby. Tim had me stay at their lodge on the Kootenai River. He contacted me and told me to make myself at home when I arrived as he would be at his home in Yaak, MT. He was getting ready to attend the Dallas Safari Club convention. He also indicated my guide, Nate, would be picking me up at 4:30 a.m. the next day. The lodge has room for a dozen people and is very well equipped. I set my alarm for 3:30 a.m. and hit the bed early.

When I awoke, I observed fresh snow on the ground. The conditions seemed pretty good. Nate arrived on time with a truck full of dogs. We drove out to a local service station for fuel and met his hunting partner, Jay. Since it was Sunday, their two sons Corey and David were joining us. Having more eyes looking for tracks seemed like a good idea. We spent several hours driving along logging roads that criss-crossed the ridges. Several smaller sets of tracks were spotted, but we opted to keep looking for something bigger. The decision was made easier by the presence of numerous wolf tracks. Wolves pose significant



risk to the dogs. At about 11 a.m. Jay contacted us on the radio and indicated he had found a fresh track that looked promising. We made our way to his location and agreed to try to track that lion. Nate and Jay pulled half a dozen dogs from the trucks, and they were on the scent up the ridge in a flash. The dogs were equipped with GPS collars so we could monitor their progress. Within ten minutes the GPS signals had stopped moving indicating the lion had likely treed. Based on the map, it was apparently only a few yards off the next switchback up the ridge. We scrambled into the trucks and made our way along the slick trail. When we arrived at the location the dogs were baying constantly, and we could see the big cat about forty feet up in a large Douglas fir (which was perfect because the beams in the house are also Douglas fir)! As we made our way down the steep slope toward the base of the tree, I lost footing and slid about ten feet down into a sapling which halted my progress. Nate's son Corey was going to try to stop my slide. I waved him off since I outweighed him by over a hundred pounds! Regaining my footing and some of my pride, I looked up at the mountain lion. I took some time to observe its beauty and snapped some photos and video with my phone as the dogs kept the lion in the tree. Nate indicated he thought the lion was a big female. That hunt area had more females than males on the state quota. Nate asked if I wanted to go ahead and shoot it. We discussed it noting the weather forecast for deteriorating tracking conditions. Nate did not mention it, but I also factored in the difficulty I was having on the steep and slippery slopes with the current pain in my left hip. I agreed I should take the opportunity. After the shot the lion disappeared down the slope. The dogs were released, and the GPS tracking collars indicated the lion had gone back the way it had ascended. It was beyond where we had originally observed the track. When the GPS indicated the cat had likely treed again, it was almost a mile away. I was disappointed in my shot knowing it had potentially put the dogs at risk. I could not understand what had gone wrong. Fortunately, the lion treed close to another



switchback. That part of the road was closed, but we could drive to within a few hundred yards and the road would be easy walking.

We made our way to the chaos of bawling dogs and again observed the lion in a large fir. I carefully picked my way down the slope trying to find a good shooting location. Mountain lions seem to have a knack for wrapping themselves in the tree making shooting angles difficult. I finally found a spot slightly above the base of the tree where I could get a clean shot. Jay leashed up the dogs and I placed a shot through the center of its chest. The lion again hit the ground, but this time it was for good. I slowly made my way down to the lion with only a couple minor slips. When I arrived it was easy to see what had happened with the first shot. Apparently, the lion had been more twisted than I had observed. The bullet had entered exactly where I had aimed, but it had angled up and forward, exiting high and just in front of the opposite shoulder. It had likely only caught one lung. After some fist bumps, the boys and I agreed to drag the lion down to the next switchback, then along the closed road a few hundred yards where Nate and Jay could meet us with the dogs and trucks. We took a few more photos then made our way back to town. On the drive, we agreed we had been extremely fortunate. We also discussed my plans for taxidermy. Nate dropped me off at the lodge so I could get into some dry clothes. He went home to do the same. He called me a bit later and told me that when he skinned the cat, he noted it was actually a male lion not a female! It is not readily obvious to determine that without close inspection. We had all just assumed it was a large female based on its facial features. That was a pleasant surprise. It reaffirmed I'd rather be lucky than good any day! I adjusted my travel to return home a bit earlier than planned after spending a few days observing the natural beauty of the area.

The lion will go nicely on that beam across from the leopard. Now I guess I need to start another hunting bucketlist

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YOUTH NIGHT

The meeting was opened with a few updates and reminders. First off, our 2025 Fundraiser Convention was a HUGE success! THANK YOU to all who attended and contributed in so many ways. Bob gave the reminder that we are always looking for sponsors for various events, including monthly meetings, youth hunts, fundraiser, and other chapter events. Contact Chapter President, Mike Kwast, at drmike@ichiroclinics.com for more information.

Scott Sieracki invited anyone interested in being considered for the Board of Directors to contact him at scott.sieracki@charter.net. Denny Sprik, our Humanitarian Chairman, thanked everyone contributing to the Humanitarian Drive this year. After a taco dinner, Denny, introduced Lisa Voss McKellips, Naturalist, with the Outdoor Discovery Center in Holland. Our chapter has a long history of supporting the Outdoor Discovery Center and the great educational work they do. Lisa was presented with a check for \$3,500. She thanked the chapter for the generous donation and our ongoing support!

Then it was time for the main event! Lisa had all the youth and young at heart gather around as she began her presentation. This year there was the opportunity to see and learn about a bullfrog, falcon, barn owl, and a snake! The kids had a chance to get up close with the snake and hold it if they wanted to!

The evening would not be complete without some winners! Sister and brother, Mary and Luke Tait, were the lucky winners of the youth guns! Kendall Naber won the jewellery and John Pitsch the Weatherby 20 gauge shotgun.

Bob Mills welcomed all the kids, members, and guests to our special "Youth Night" membership meeting on March 13, 2025.

STORY BY TODD MOELKER





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Carson Nyenhuis - Founder and President

Dear Safari Club International Michigan Chapter,

Thank you for your generous gift of \$5,000.00 that you made on 2/13/2024. Every act of your generosity helps us further our mission. Your gift will help us get more people back into the outdoors to experience nature, camaraderie, and emotional and spiritual well-being. Your gift is allowing us to realize a dream. It's great to get back out into the woods. All that have wanted to do is to share the hunting experience that gave me my life back so that I can help as many others who might also be experiencing a life-changing disability. It was the thing that helped me more than anything else. Thank you again for your most generous support and your willingness to make a difference.

*Sincerely,
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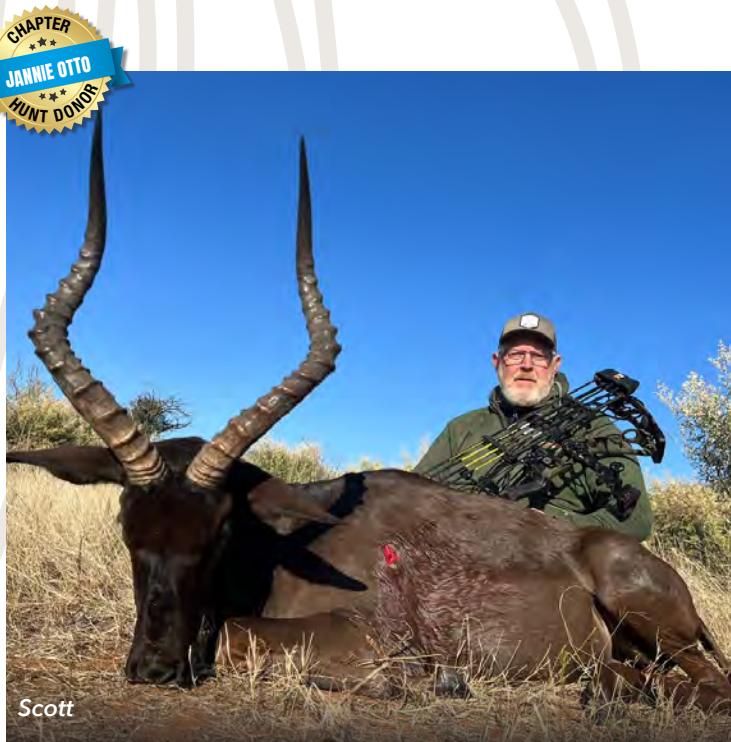
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Youth Pheasant Hunt

STORY BY BOB MILLS

We had another safe and successful youth pheasant hunt this year! Saturday, March 22, we welcomed 30 kids to Haymarsh Hunt Club for a morning of shooting clays and hunting pheasants.

After a safety briefing, the kids headed out to the range to shoot clays and get warmed up for their hunt. Each guide headed out to the field with their dog and three kids. Most of the kids were accompanied by their parents and/or grandparents, so it was an event for the whole family to enjoy. After their hunt they headed to the cleaning station to learn how to clean the birds and package them up to take home.

We were able to keep this hunt free for the kids because of funds raised at our annual fundraiser and a donation by Christianity Outdoors. Thank you to everyone who sponsored and supported our fundraiser. It really made a difference in the lives of these future hunters and members. A special thank you to Jay and Stacey Platz, Drew Koning, and Terry Blauwkamp for helping at the hunt today. I would also like to thank Dale Ringerwolfe for donating shotgun shells for shooting clays. A big shoutout as well to the guides for donating their time and everyone at the Haymarsh Hunt Club for supporting our chapter's fundraiser. We look forward to a great hunt again next year!



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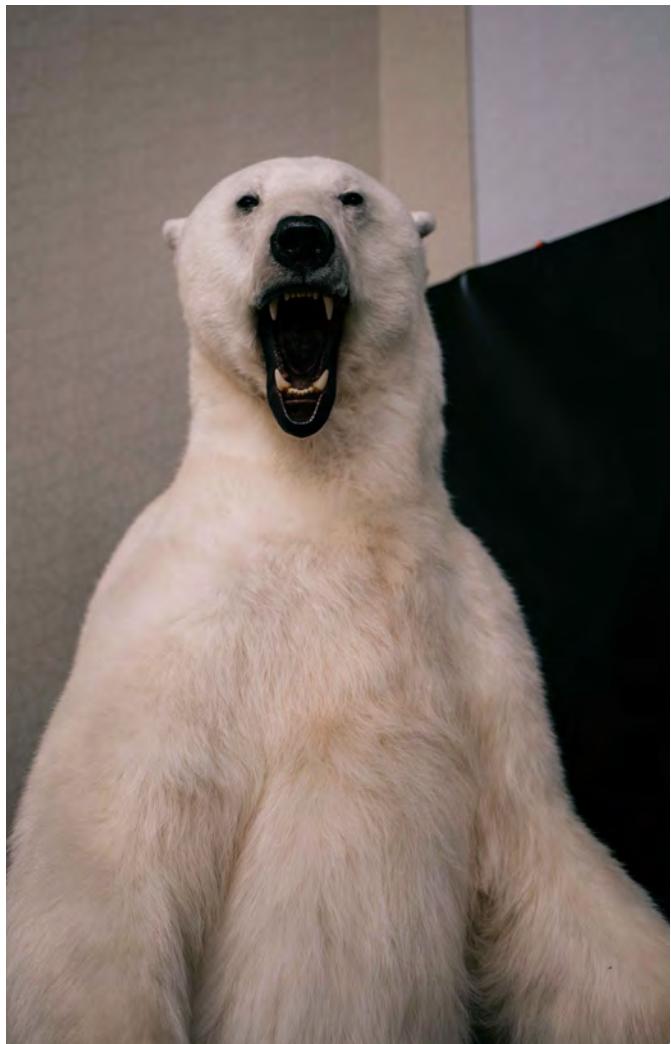
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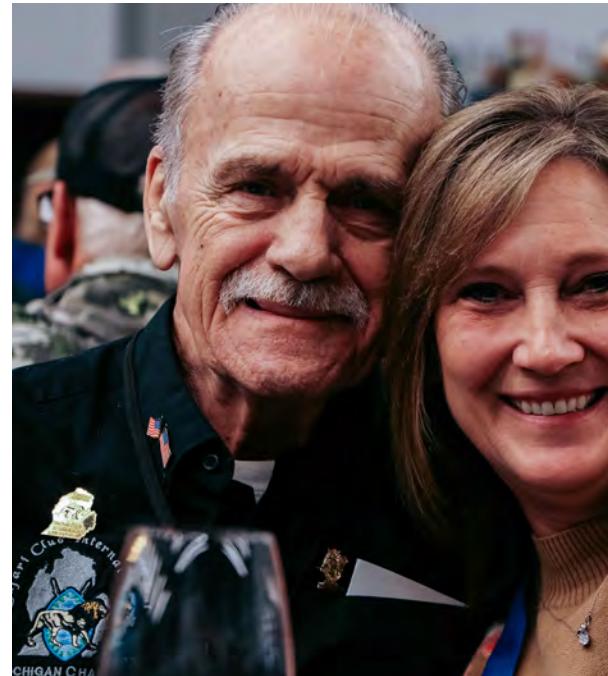




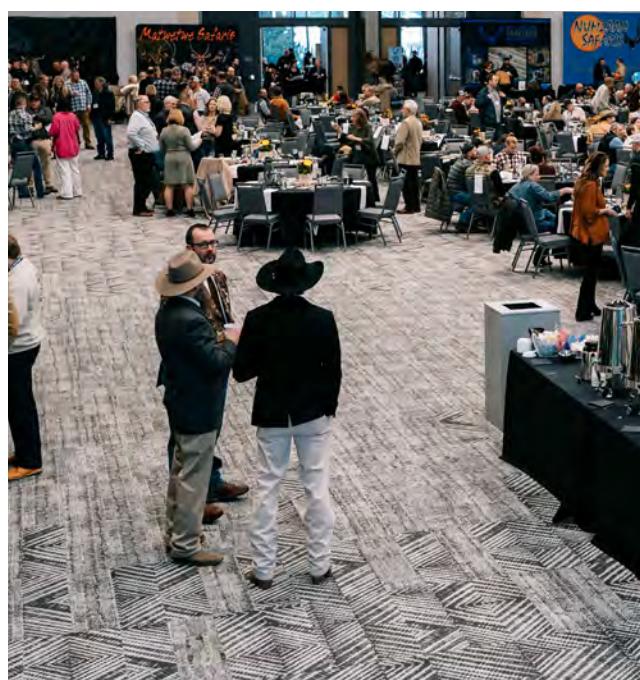
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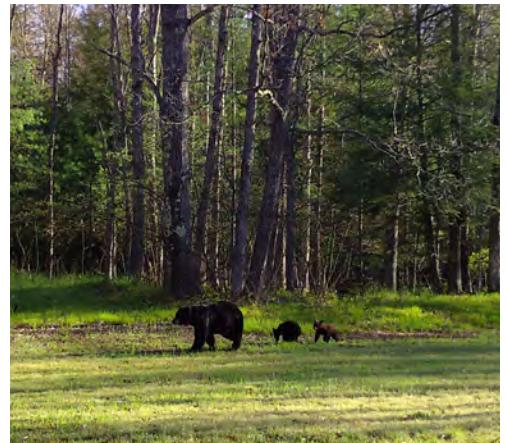
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EZEKIEL GUIKEMA-11 HART, MI

On behalf of The Wildlife Center at Legends Ranch, I would like to express our heartfelt gratitude for your generous sponsorship of our 1st Time Hunter program. Your support has made it possible for us to offer life-changing opportunities to 59 new hunters this year and a total of 343 since 2020.

Your sponsorship plays a crucial role in recruiting and introducing new individuals to the wonderful world of hunting. Through this program, we aim to ignite a passion for the sport and foster a deep appreciation for wildlife conservation. By providing these aspiring hunters with the chance to experience the thrill of the hunt in a safe and controlled environment, we are confident they will carry this love for hunting and conservation throughout their lives.

Ezekiel Guikema is an eleven year old boy who attends Oceana Christian School. Ezekiel came to The Wildlife Center at Legends Ranch through our FREE School Tours program. We reached out to each of our 54 schools that visited us during 2024 and requested they each send us one student chosen to be a 1st Time Hunter at Legends Ranch. Ezekiel won a contest at his school and won the opportunity to become a 1st Time Hunter. He attended his hunt this December with his father and successfully harvested his first whitetail deer. He is so excited to use his hunting skills at home next year!



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We would like to thank all of you who donated to our Humanitarian Fund this year. All monies donated go directly to causes that support events for challenged youth & adults, veterans, others with special needs, and organizations that support our mission and goals. Your continued support enables us to help so many, in so many ways!

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We are very thankful for each donor. Your donations make the important work of SCI and SCI Michigan possible.*

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*If we missed recognizing or thanking anyone, we apologize.
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