

Divide Camp's mission: Healing of 9/11 era veterans

By Steve Tool

Wallowa County Chieftain

Divide Camp spent another summer offering rip-roaring adventure as well as idyllic solitude to about 50 combat-wounded veterans. Camp vice-president and Marine Corps veteran, Andy Marcum, said the camp's mission of healing for both physical and psychological healing of 9/11 era veterans is an important one.

The camp held its second annual archery tournament for veterans in July. The tournament features 3-D wildlife targets.

"It's just about getting veterans outdoors and into archery hunting," Marcum said. "We had 10 vets up there shooting at 20 targets, and we gave away one bow and a bunch of archery gear." He added that the event allows veterans to hang out together over the two mile course.

This season also featured a revival of a fly-tying class, with the camp also providing rods and reels so students could test their creations out in the field at Bonney Lake in the Eagle Cap Wilderness. The class packed into the Wallowas with Kaare Tingelstad while six pack goats (yes, pack goats) packed in the majority of the gear.

"They were able to put their flies right to use, and they caught a bunch of fish, so it was really a successful trip," Marcum said.

At the moment, the camp is busy with their yearly guided hunts of deer, bear and elk, courtesy of local landowners and the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife that furnishes five tags, two bull elk, two buck deer and a bear tag, to the organization. This allows vets to rifle hunt from August 1 to the end of November.

"It's great for these guys who are really disabled who may not necessarily be able to get within bow range," Marcum said. "We've worked with them a lot, and they've made it really easy for veterans to get tags at a lower cost." He added that none of the hunts would be possible without landowners who allow the vets to hunt their property and allow vets the use of landowner preference tags, etc.

seven elk hunts: five cow hunts and two bull hunts — with a 100 percent success rate that goes all the way back to 2017.

The two bull hunts were memorial hunts for vets killed in action in the War on Terror with friends of the deceased utilizing the tag. The day the Chieftain spoke with Marcum, Sept. 13, one of the two memorial hunts had just completed with the harvest of a 6x7 bull elk — a record size for the organization. The father of the killed warrior also participated.

"These hunts are especially powerful, especially when you have the father out here," Marcum said. "That's what he used to do with his son, and getting him around guys exactly like his son, that knew his son, is powerful stuff."

Marcum also noted that Good Times Productions of Enterprise filmed this year's hunt and will put together a video for a hunting program for the camp.

The camp itself got a few upgrades: The main lodge got a new roof while the rest of the cabins are being "chinked" and the remodeled outdoor kitchen from 18 months ago is holding up well and a walk-in cooler donated to the camp is a nice addition according to Marcum.

"We're kind of where we need to be in order to support these vets and house them comfortably," Marcum said. He added that the camp is looking for more year-round activities. They just bought the headquarters building they'd been renting in Joseph toward that end as the Big Sheep Creek main camp is mostly inaccessible in the winter. The group still needs to raise about \$60,000 for the purchase.

"We're thinking about steelhead fishing and turkey hunting in the spring," Marcum said. He also added shed hunting as another pursuit.

"We have great people in the county willing to support us," Marcum said. "The more people we can get on board with the mission of Divide Camp, the better." He also mentioned another factor in the camp's success: "We give glory to God for all of it," Marcum said. "Listening to God and what He's telling us, I always feel that He's guiding us right where we need to be."

In fact, the camp has already taken vets on