

TOUCHSTONE FIELD TRIAL A HUGE SUCCESS

By MARK WALLACE / *Picayune Item* Outdoor Writer, May 15, 2003

If you have ever wanted to feel that the life of a sportsman is complete and understood, it was this weekend. The hearts of the area sportsmen and women are huge and unmistakably giving. The 5th Annual Touchstone Energy Benefit Field Trial was held this past weekend and the turnout was great.

Let me give you a brief understanding of the trial, how it came to be and the results and benefit of it. The trial started with a few Coast Electric employees that are avid sportsmen and women that wanted to give a little back to the community. The field trial has benefited many organizations from March of Dimes to Make-A-Wish over the past four years. This year the perfect match was made with the sportsmen and women, Catch-A-Dream.



Catch-A-Dream was born in the heart of a great sportsman, outdoor writer and sculptor Mr. Bruce Brady. It is simple; any young person age 18 or younger who is a U.S. Citizen and has a life threatening illness is eligible for a wish to be granted. The wishes granted are of outdoor experiences such as wanting to fish for a certain species or with a certain person, or make the hunt of a lifetime. The organization has filled the gap for many young folks that have a dream hunt or outdoor experience that most wish granting organizations scare away from.

Catch-A-Dream is under the 4-H Field and Stream program at Mississippi State University and is headed up by Dr. Marty Brunson, Extension Leader/Professor, Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, MSU.

I especially want to thank Mrs. Peggy Brady, widow of the late Bruce Brady for making the trip along with Dr. Cathy Shropshire, Executive Director, Mississippi Wildlife Federation, and Dr. Brunson. It really means a lot and goes to show that they are dedicated to the cause. Not only did they come, but also purchased several items in the auction and presented several large items to be used for fund raising by the field trial committee.

Now that you understand a little about Catch-A-Dream, a little about the field trial results. The field trial hosted 171 hounds from several surrounding states. The Friday night before the hunt was a great fellowship time with hunters coming in and getting their hounds ready for the five-hour speed and drive competition. With music, crawfish, catfish and a lot of hunting stories flowing and lies about how good each others dog set the tone for the trial.

Roll call was at 5:30 a.m. and the hounds were released at 6 a.m. for the five-hour speed and

drive. Running was great and everyone had a great time even with the heat. Besides the actual trial, there was a lot for the participating families to do. Fun jumps for the kids, raffles and a live auction along with music and great food made the day great.

After the hunt and scoring was over, I had a little fun with the live auction. The hunters were great and I take my hat off to them for opening their pockets and giving to such a great cause. Many items from local stores were given for the auction and the ever-favorite homemade jelly, cakes and candies were all up for bid.



We also had a special guest appearance by Ms. Hannah LaBorde, 8 years old. Hannah was the recipient of the dream funded by the trial last year. Hannah was looking great and brought her pictures of the trip she made to Disney World, last year the trial funded the Make-A-Wish foundation of Mississippi. Hannah got in on the bidding action and had a great time and truly showed what it was all about.

Ben Mitchell won the trial and challenge trophy with 255 total points. Second thru tenth place was as follows: Tim Woods, Richie Ladner, Bill Slyder, Steve D., Bill Slyder, Bill Slyder, John Beckwith, Joel Smith and Tommy McGill. The challenge trophy is given to the winner each year but returns year after year. The trial raised a total of \$5,000 and a huge thanks goes to all the area sponsors and everyone involved in making this event possible.

Event Sponsors are: Carters Jewelry, Coast Electric Power Association, Wal-Mart Super Center, Crossroads Feed Store, Circle S Western Wear, Wheat's Roofing and Home Center, Longleaf Farm and Garden, Dockside Seafood, Stewarts Home and Garden Center, Fortenberry's Custom Slaughter, GarnerLumley Electric, Maximum Auto Parts, Himel Auto Parts, Double D Meat Packing, Industrial Supply Co., Frito Lay, Dolly Madison, Dominos Pizza, Scott's Old Time General Store, Coast Coca-Cola Bottling, Coastal Farm Supply, Necaise Feed and Seed, Dixie Land Home and Garden, Cale's FarmSupply, Vancleave Glass and Mirror.

I look forward to next year and feel honored to sit on the field trial committee with Scott White, Warren Brown and David Smith. Thank you to all the Coast Electric employees that took a little time out of their personal schedule to give to these deserving children.