



# SESSER-VALIER OUTDOORSMEN CLUB – REND LAKE

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The Sesser-Valier Outdoorsmen Club supports several special events in support of Rend Lake's missions. These events include the Annual Rend Lake Deer Hunt for Individuals with Disabilities, Annual Christmas Tree Drop, Paralyzed Veterans of America Bass Tournament, and Rend Lake Shooting Classic. The Club's mission is to get students outdoors through volunteer opportunities in which students assist both youth and disabled recreationalists. Their commitment and dedication has helped Rend Lake continue to provide outdoor recreation opportunities to all visitors while maintaining our natural resources.

- Established in 1980.
- The SVOC has assisted with the Rend Lake Deer Hunt for Individuals with Disabilities for over 40 years, scouting for blind locations, camouflaging the blinds, providing meals for the hunters, and assisting them in any way. Students track, haul, and field dress the harvested deer for hunt participants. The club has also hosted a large banquet for the last 33 years to support and celebrate this amazing event.
- In 2019 alone, the Outdoorsmen Club had more than 70 volunteers provide over \$105K to benefit the events and visitors of Rend Lake.
- Partnership Type: Memorandum of Understanding.



SVOC members and hunters during the Annual Rend Lake Deer Hunt for Individuals with Disabilities.



SVOC volunteers during the Rend Lake Christmas Tree Drop. Volunteers help build and place fish habitat structure to improve fish populations at Rend Lake.





## 2020 USACE Excellence in Partnership Award Nomination Sesser-Valier Outdoorsmen Club Supporting Materials

During the Annual Rend Lake Hunt for Individuals with Disabilities, the Sesser-Valier Outdoorsmen Club (SVOC) members assist hunters with every aspect of the day. From building the blind to their hunters' needs to laying scent or helping retrieve harvested game. The hunt provides sportsmen the opportunity to enjoy the great outdoors regardless of their physical ability and creates memories and bonds that truly last a lifetime.



The Washington Post

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### TEENAGERS GIVE LIFT TO DISABLED YET BUSY HUNTERS

REND CITY, ILL. -- Larry Muzzy thought his hunting days were over after he lost the use of his legs in a 1979 car wreck.

But for the last five years, he has been riding into the forest on the strong, young shoulders of teenagers.

"Without these kids, I wouldn't be able to do what I love doing, and that's getting into the woods," said Muzzy, 40, who weighs about 150 pounds. "When I got paralyzed, I never thought I would hunt again."

A high school club is helping disabled hunters such as Muzzy go into the woods, build hiding places, track wounded deer, and skin and gut the animals.

Before dawn one chilly day at Rend Lake in south-central Illinois, 17-year-old Jeff Patchett waited to take Muzzy out of a wheelchair and onto his back for a half-mile hike into the forest.

With a grin, Muzzy grabbed his rifle: "I'm ready to rock-and-roll."

The Outdoorsmen's Club at the 200-student Sesser-Valier High School has received national recognition for helping disabled hunters pursue their passion. Its supporters include guitarist and hunting fan Ted Nugent. The group also recycles, studies wildlife, maintains an apple orchard and adheres to an environmental code of conduct.

"Our goal is to teach kids how much work is involved in taking care of our planet," said Gene Morgan, a biology teacher and club founder. "If they do all their work, then they get to do the fun things, like working the deer hunt, snow skiing, mountain climbing, whitewater canoeing."

Taking hunters out into the woods at 5 a.m. is fun?

"Yeah, that's considered one of the fun things," Morgan said, laughing. "The kids wouldn't miss it for anything."

During the November deer season, about 30 handicapped hunters were helped by 50 club members. On Friday, more than two dozen youngsters assisted 11 hunters.

Members can develop strong bonds with their hunters.

"When your hunter leaves and you hug him and he's all excited, you're kind of sad," said Deidra Dame, 17. "They're just so happy you helped them."

SVOC members and hunters proudly display their harvests during the 2019 Annual Rend Lake Deer Hunt for Individuals with Disabilities (1, 2, 3).

An article by the Washington Post highlights the annual event hosted by SVOC and Rend Lake (4).



1 [https://thesouthern.com/sports/outdoors/sesser-valier-hunt-going-strong/article\\_d1738bd1-970e-5d4c-8ca2-e3676bdf5557.html](https://thesouthern.com/sports/outdoors/sesser-valier-hunt-going-strong/article_d1738bd1-970e-5d4c-8ca2-e3676bdf5557.html)

## Sesser-Valier hunt going strong

Les Winkler  
Nov 17, 2016

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Brianna Knight (from left) Carl Winger and Ashley Laskowski pose with a buck from the 2015 hunt.

PHOTOS PROVIDED BY MIKE SAMPLE

[https://thesouthern.com/sports/outdoors/sesser-valier-hunt-going-strong/article\\_d1738bd1-970e-5d4c-8ca2-e3676bdf5557.html](https://thesouthern.com/sports/outdoors/sesser-valier-hunt-going-strong/article_d1738bd1-970e-5d4c-8ca2-e3676bdf5557.html)

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Outdoorsmen Club

November 24, 2019 · 🌐

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And with sunset another whirlwind 4 days known as Deer Banquet and Rend Lake Deer Hunt for the disabled. Total success again this year in new friendships made, old friendships strengthened, and memories made, and as a side bonus, our hunters went 21 for 29. Congrats to all the hunters, great job to all our Outdoorsmen, and a big, special thanks to all our volunteers (couldn't do it without you all)! Only 365 days until we get to do it again!



👍❤️ 124

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Justin Jackson

Congrats to all the hunters! I miss doin this every year! Definitely made some amazing friends and memories!

Like · Reply · 44w



An article in The Southern Illinoisian highlights the Deer Hunt's history and community support (1).

A social media post shows the enthusiasm and local support for the event (2).

SVOC members preparing their hunters' blind during Blind Building Day (3-4).







SVOC members volunteer during the Rend Lake Shooting Classic which gives people with disabilities the opportunity to compete in archery and sporting clay shooting activities (1).

An SVOC member assists a participant of the Rend Lake Shooting Classic safely take aim (2).

SVOC members at the Southern Illinois National Hunting and Fishing Days Celebration (3).

During Southern Illinois National Hunting and Fishing Days, SVOC members can be found working the entrance gates, youth BB gun shoots, kids fishing pond, and serving meals (4-5).







The SVOC participates in the Annual Rend Lake Christmas Tree Drop. Helping to build and place fish structures into Rend Lake to create more habitat and increase fish populations. During this event, the SVOC members work alongside Rend Lake Park Rangers and gain hands-on experience in the Natural Resources career field (1-4).

