



# Gary Franklin and the Illinois National Wild Turkey Federation Provide Hunt of a Lifetime

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**Springfield, IL** – Mr. Gary Franklin, NWTF Diamond Life Sponsor and Members of the Illinois National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTF) have recently help make a dream come true for an American hero. Chris Fleming, a 28 year old resident of Collinsville, IL, was injured in Afghanistan in June of 2009 when the vehicle he was driving in struck an improvised explosive device. Chris's injuries resulted in the loss of both of his legs from the knee down. Chris has not let his injury stop his passion to get outdoors and enjoy the things he loved prior to his injury.

Since November of 2009, Chris has been a very active member of the Illinois Wheelin' Sportsmen program, which is the National Wild Turkey Federation's outreach program to help people of all disabilities have the opportunity to participate in outdoor activities. After a special presentation recognizing disabled veterans in attendance at January's National Wild Turkey Federation Illinois State Awards Banquet, Chris was approached by Gary Franklin about his interest in going on an elk hunt in New Mexico fully outfitted. Mr. Franklin challenged Chris that he would need to be mobile by the time of the hunt in order to be successful.

After several grueling months of physical rehabilitation, Chris arrived in New Mexico on December 13<sup>th</sup>, 2010 and was able to hike up to two miles a day through the New Mexico back country on his prosthetic legs. Chris was accompanied on his hunt by a NWTF provided camera crew and two guides, including Chad Franklin, NWTF Regional Field Supervisor. After three days of scaling steep hillsides, and walking miles per day in the beautiful New Mexico high country, Chris had still not taken his dream elk, but he was not losing his spirit as they had seen over 200 elk so far. In the

twilight hours of the fourth day, Chad located a very large bull and Chris was able to maneuver himself into position and make a text book shot completing this hunt of a lifetime! At the conclusion of the hunt, Chris learned of his final surprise.

Gerald & Terry Lively of Little O's Taxidermy in Odin, IL had offered to mount Chris's trophy elk for him free of charge! The following NWTF supporters Gary and Chad Franklin, Blake Pazero, of No Bull Trophy Hunts, the IL NWTF State Chapter, Little O's Taxidermy, and Van Hale Trophy Outfitters were able to provide this lifelong memory for a true American hero.

### **About the NWTF:**

The National Wild Turkey Federation is a nonprofit conservation organization that works daily to further its mission of conserving the wild turkey and preserving our hunting heritage.

Through dynamic partnerships with state, federal and provincial wildlife agencies, the NWTF and its more than 350,000 members have helped restore wild turkey populations across the country, spending more than \$306 million to conserve 14 million acres of habitat for all types of wildlife.

The Federation works to increase interest in the outdoors by bringing new hunters and conservationists into the fold through outdoor education events and its outreach programs – Women in the Outdoors, Wheelin' Sportsmen, JAKES and Xtreme JAKES.

The NWTF was founded in 1973 and is headquartered in Edgefield, S.C. According to many state and federal agencies, the comeback of the wild turkey is arguably the greatest conservation success story in North America's wildlife history.

Visit [www.nwtf.org](http://www.nwtf.org) or call (800) THE-NWTF for details.