

Break Ground For Veterans Retreat; Tipton Man's Dream

by Krista Clark

The dream of a Tipton man to develop a hunting and fishing resort in rural Washington county for disabled veterans, veterans, their families and friends took a significant step forward in early June when ground-breaking for the first building to be located at the 32-acre site took place.

Chuck Geertz, a 54-year-old retired Army veteran whose family has lived in Tipton since 1997, has worked hard for several years to get the project underway.

He'd originally planned to spend his retirement hunting and fishing, but when Geertz realized how great the needs of Iowa's veterans are, he decided to dedicate himself to developing "The English River Outfitters Resort," which is located in Washington county that will be a retreat for any veteran who wants to go there.

On June 6, 100 people participated in ground-

breaking for the first structure at the resort, which will be a 30 by 60 foot pole building that will be used as a lodge/bunkhouse/storage unit until sufficient funds are raised for the lodge and bunkhouse that will eventually be built on the site.

Second District Congressman Dave Loebsack and State Representative Dave Heaton of Henry county, were among those who participated in the groundbreaking.

Other recent achievements by Geertz and others involved in the resort include getting approval from the Iowa Department of Natural Resources and the Army Corps of Engineers to proceed with other aspects of the project.

The English River Outfitters Resort is located adjacent to the 215-acre Sockum Ridge County Park in Washington county, 5 miles south of Washington, Iowa on Wayland Road. It's a little

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TIPTON
CONSERVATIVE
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Groundbreaking for the English River Outfitters Resort, designed "for veterans by veterans" and led by Tipton's Chuck Geertz, took place at the resort site, 5 miles south of Washington, Iowa, in early June. Participating in the ground-breaking for the first building to be constructed on the site include, in front, l-r: Chuck Geertz, the group's president; 2nd District Congressman Dave Loebsack, Bobby Briggs, vice-president of English River Outfitters and State Representative Dave Heaton of Henry county, Iowa.

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over an hour drive from Tipton.

One of the next activities following the ground breaking will be the arrival in late July of 5,000 cement blocks that have been donated to the resort for various construction projects.

Members of the 389th Engineers from the U.S. Army Reserve Center at Middletown, Iowa located near Burlington, will deliver the blocks.

The reserve soldiers will also be doing preparation work at the site, including leveling the ground for the buildings, Geertz said.

The Tipton man got his inspiration for this project—which, when finished, will include over \$500,000 worth of construction—through his desire to help disabled veterans adjust back to as normal a life as can be expected through a positive outdoor experience.

"We want to provide a safe outdoor location, with other veterans, to help promote healing and closure, at no cost to the soldier," Geertz.

Activities held at the English River Outfitters Resort site this year included a spring turkey hunt, held every weekend in April and May and a mid-May "All Lady Veteran" campout, where 15

women participated.

"We want to provide all our veterans a place where they can have a relaxed atmosphere to hunt, fish, hike, camp and enjoy a bonfire. At this site they can realize their strength and independence," Geertz said.

On July 3rd the 2nd annual "American Soldiers Past and Present" Poker Run began at and returned to the Sportsters Bar and Grill in Tipton, raising funds for the structures to be built at the resort.

Other upcoming events include live music and a street dance in Parnell, Iowa on Aug. 1 and the 4th annual "Honor Our Heroes Ride" to be held in Walford on Aug. 7th.

English River Outfitters Resort is a 501(c)(3) entity, devoted solely to charitable purposes.

If you'd like to learn more about the organization you can contact Geertz by email at chuck-geertz@englishriveroutfitters.org; look at the web site, at www.englishriveroutfitters.org or go to the Facebook page, under English River Outfitters Resort.

Geertz can also be reached at 563-886-6494.