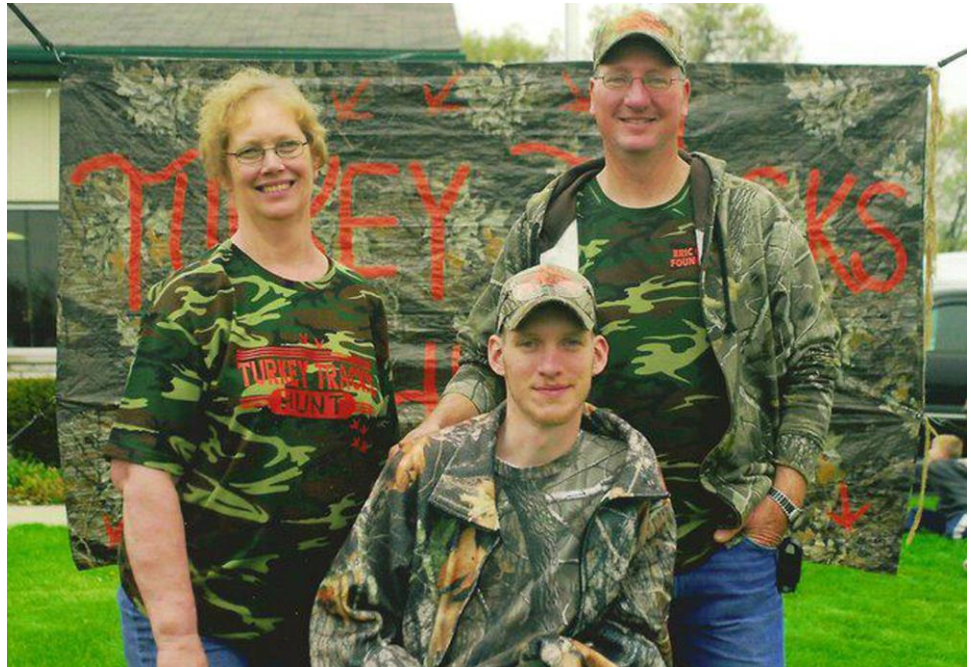


The Turkey Tracks Hunt Eric Corey Foundation Fund

Shuffling along the African vegetation with his rifle in hand, Eric Corey moved closer toward his target. He paused and positioned himself for a precise shot. Suddenly firing his rifle, he scored a direct hit at a wounded cape buffalo.

Eric's father and longtime hunting partner, Doug, said he remembered filming the hunt in the Zimbabwean wilderness.

"Eric usually is pretty cool and calm after scoring an animal," Doug said. "That time, he was almost hyperventilating he was breathing so hard. He said, 'Dad, I've never been so excited in my whole life.'"



Eric with his parents, Carol and Doug

Since he was 5 years old, Eric enjoyed the simplicity and the excitement that he found in hunting. His father instilled this passion within him and had a large involvement in Eric's discovery of the sport. Eric also loved sports, and he enjoyed playing basketball and baseball. But when he was in eighth grade, running the bases became more difficult. Doctors said that Eric's muscles were simply growing too fast and that time would help alleviate the problem. Later, they discovered that Eric was showing early symptoms of Lou Gehrig's disease, a neurodegenerative condition that would slowly deteriorate Eric's central nervous system.

Eric's mother Carol said she remembers when she gave him the news.

"The day that I told him, we were on our way to driver's ed," she said. "He looked at me and said, 'You know mom, this disease may take away my sports, but I will crawl into the woods to hunt if I have to.'"

Although Eric slowly lost his ability to play traditional sports, and his condition confined him to a wheelchair, he always found a way to hunt. Organizations sponsored Eric as he traveled across the U.S. and the world to pursue his passion.

Eric's decreased mobility had no effect on his generous spirit. He saw that, despite his disease, he was able to hunt, and he wanted to provide the opportunity to others by establishing a hunting event in Starke County.

"That's why we started Turkey Tracks, because of all of the stuff he has had the opportunity to do," Carol said.

Turkey Tracks was established to give those with disabilities the hunt of a lifetime. During its first year, Turkey Tracks provided 10 children with the opportunity to participate in an organized hunt in Indiana, something that Eric said wasn't common for the Hoosier state. The Coreys organized the event and raised their own funds with the help of organizations like Hunt of a Lifetime and the Outdoor Dream Foundation. But during the second year, the family realized that placing the funds with the Northern Indiana Community Foundation would help their new charitable endeavor grow—something they could not do on their own.

"The Community Foundation was our blessing," Carol said. "I don't know what I would do without them."

Over the next two years, the Turkey Tracks hunt continued to grow. Sadly, in January of 2012, after the third Turkey Tracks hunt, Eric passed away at the young age of 25. One of his last wishes was that the hunt would go on forever, even without him. Thirty-one hunters took more than 20 wild turkeys at the following hunt and more than 300 people met at the Washington Township Community Building to honor the memory of Eric Corey.

"The best part is seeing them harvest that animal and come back with a happy face," Carol says. "Eric has told us that it's not about the hunt but the people you meet."

The Coreys can recount numerous touching stories from just the first two weekends the event took place. A blind boy, despite his disability, squeezed the trigger and harvested his first turkey with the help of a guide. Another boy who couldn't move from his neck down blew through a device to fire his gun. And perhaps the most touching story the Coreys told was about a boy with Leukemia who participated in a Turkey Tracks hunt to hunt with his grandfather one last time. In a photo, both are beaming after their successful and memorable hunt.

"It's all worth the work and the money," Doug says. "The best part is seeing the smiles on the faces of these hunters. Thanks to the Community Foundation, that's possible."

At the end of 2013, Doug and Carol Corey and the Board Members of the Turkey Tracks Hunt Eric Corey Foundation decided to begin a permanent endowment fund with the Community Foundation in addition to the non-permanent fund already established. The Turkey Tracks Hunt Eric Corey Foundation Fund will continue to grow and to provide sustainability for this worthy organization so that it can fulfill Eric's dream of continuing to help others, just as others helped him, forever.