

Find a pot of gold at the end of the hunt

Share Foundation hosts 15th annual Leprechaun Hunt

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PROVIDED PHOTO Bagpiper Kathleen Lang piped Father Blaney up the hill so he could blow the golden horn to start the 2008 Leprechaun Hunt to benefit Sharing Meadows.

He's not little -- and he's definitely not green.

None the less, when this time of the year comes around, the Rev. Dennis Blaney turns into a leprechaun who runs around the 185 acres of Sharing Meadows hiding 29 fairies to be traded in for pots of gold for the annual Leprechaun Hunt. The hunt will be held from noon to 6 p.m. Aug. 2 in Rolling Prairie, just past Michigan City.

This one-of-a-kind Sharing Meadows Benefit is sure to be the hit of summer. For those unfamiliar with Sharing Meadows it was founded by Blaney through the Share Foundation, a not-for-profit Christian organization serving the residential, vocational and social needs of mentally challenged or other-abled adults.

The 185-acre community provides a tranquil place for adults to live, work, and relax in peace and dignity. There, the unique gifts of each individual are recognized and appreciated as they focus on what they are able to do. There are four individual residential buildings.

"The Leprechaun Hunt is a fundraiser. We use this money to support the 22 residents of the villages," Blaney said. "That will cover the food, the utilities, and other necessities during the year."

Because the foundation receives no government support they have always relied solely upon private donations and fundraising efforts to support their work.

So what is the event all about?

The Leprechaun Hunt is an entire day of tons of food, fun, fishing, boating, winning great prizes and fabulous entertainment. The main event remains the hunt for 29 leprechauns,



hidden throughout Sharing Meadows, worth from \$50 to \$1500. Children of all ages are welcome and when accompanied by parents or grandparents, children 17 and younger are free. There will also be children's games.

"We've been busy trimming trees of low hanging branches so the hay wagons can breeze their way though to all the great fishing and boating spots," Blaney said. "And the weather is going to be perfect. We have a new 150-foot L-shaped pier on Hog Lake that is perfect for lots of fishing."

He also said the villagers have been busy making woodcrafts to sell, including divining rods to find the pots of gold and whistles to call in the leprechauns. There will be ceramics and woven rugs for sale along with potted plants, day lilies and ornamental grasses.

Chef Philippe Joseph (formerly of Stone's Bones in Munster, now in partnership with Howard and Sons Meat at Philippe's Catering, Carry-out and Deli in Schererville) is back with his famous barbecued ribs. Also Chef Ruge of Ruge Meats in Valparaiso and Matt Kis from Top Dog and Great Lakes Catering in Michigan City are making pulled pork, chicken, hamburgers and hot dogs and an all-you-care-to-eat buffet of roast lamb, corned beef and cabbage, fresh roasted sweet corn drawn in butter and assorted salads. There'll be beer and wine for the adults and soda for the wee leprechauns.

"We have set up three food centers this year to make food lines shorter and quicker for everyone," Blaney said. "We even got a second snow cone machine for the children this year."

But he warns guests to save room for home-baked zucchini bread topped with fresh berries and whipped cream.

The day will be loaded with Irish music by The Ploughboys of Chicago, The Doolin Clan and New Element, both of Crown Point, and, most importantly, the Villagers of Sharing Meadows.

Joan and Marty Collins of Munster are faithful volunteers -- he is the "unofficial" Share photographer -- and they've been doing this for 15 years.

"We have no friends or relatives with other-abled adult children, we are just on the giving side," Marty said. "It's a give back to the parents."

"It's our way of being thankful for being blessed with healthy children and grandchildren," Joan said. "This community is very important, especially now when so many other-abled adults are outliving their caregivers."

The 15th annual Leprechaun Hunt from noon to 6 p.m. Aug. 2. Gates open at 11 a.m.

Where: Sharing Meadows is located on La Porte County Road 300 East in Rolling Prairie, Ind.; between Michigan City and South Bend. Take US 20 to La Porte County Road 300 East, then two miles to Sharing Meadows.

Cost: \$40 in advance or \$50 at the gate. Seniors 65 and older receive a \$5 discount.

FYI: For tickets: In Munster, call Marty and Joan Collins at (219) 972-2158; in Schererville, Bill and Anne Franz at (219) 662-1536 in Crown Point; Tony and Lorry Lach in Valparaiso; or call Sharing Meadows at (219) 778-2585.