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Hunters raise funds for cancer research while controlling coyote populations

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Miami Co. hunter turns coyote pelts into money for cancer research

Story

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Carson Gerber

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by Carson Gerber

MACY – Can coyotes help cure cancer? In the hands of Larry Frank, they can.

For the last 12 years, hunters have been dropping off dead coyotes at the 67-year-old's house, located near the small, unincorporated town of Macy in Miami County.

Once he has them, Frank skins them, cleans the pelts and sells them to North American Fur Auctions in Toronto, Canada.

After that, Frank donates all the money he gets for the furs to the American Cancer Society, which funds research into the causes of and a cure for cancer.

It's an outreach that started small. In 2004, Frank and a handful of friends harvested just five pelts, bringing in only \$57.

Since then, it's slowly morphed into a full-on charitable outreach that today is known as "Coyotes for Charity."

This year, 120 hunters from all over northern Indiana dropped off 410 coyote pelts at Frank's door.

That brings the 12-year grand total to 2,002 furs that have generated more than \$45,000 for cancer research, and that number is set to go up significantly once this year's harvest is sold on the market.

Frank said when he first came up with the idea to turn coyote pelts into an altruistic outreach, he never expected the idea to catch on as much as it has.

"It's grown more than I can even keep up with," he said. "It's getting bigger than I can handle as a one-man show."

Frank said he's been hunting coyote for decades, but started doing it with a group of bird-hunting friends in 2004 who were looking for something to do in the winter.

After harvesting five coyotes, they didn't want the animals to go to waste. So Frank decided to harvest their pelts and sell them. That presented its own problem.

"We didn't know what to do with the money," Frank said. "We didn't want to use it for gas or buying food or something, so we decided to just give it to charity."

It wasn't hard to decide to which group to donate the money. Just about all the hunters had someone battling cancer in their families.

For Frank, it was his son, who was diagnosed when he was a sophomore at North Miami High School.

"No family is immune to cancer," he said. "Everybody is affected by it, so it was a natural place to go to with our charitable giving. If you can do something to help fight cancer, that's a good thing."

Frank and his hunting buddies didn't advertise the outreach much, but word started getting around about what they were doing.

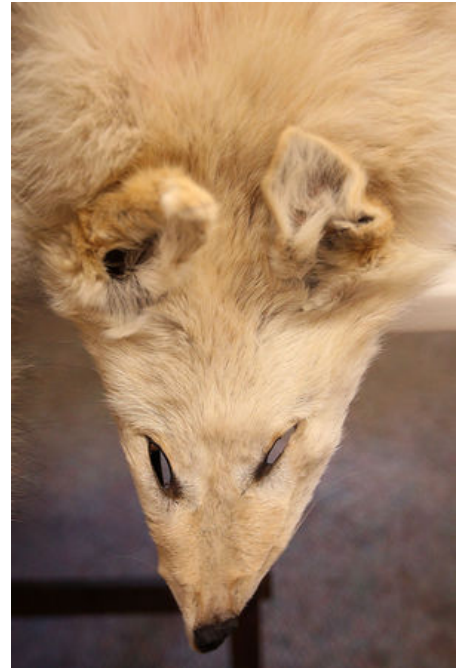
The second year, a few other hunters joined in, and ended up dropping off 18 coyotes at Frank's door.

The next year, there were 34 furs. Then 72. By the fifth year, hunters had harvested 130 coyotes that Frank turned into \$4,500 for the American Cancer Society.

By that time, his employer, Square D Company in Peru, had jumped on board with the outreach and started matching dollar for dollar all the money raised from the pelts.

Every year, a few more hunters joined in. Farmers who normally didn't let people hunt on their property began agreeing to let hunters go after coyotes to help out with the charity, Frank said.

"Once the community became aware of what we were doing, farmers were more willing to let us hunt on their land," he said. "The whole thing just started feeding on itself."



Kelly Lafferty Gerber

Coyote charity

A coyote fur drapes across the table in Larry Frank's work room in Macy on Thursday, April 23, 2015. Frank leads an outreach called "Hunting for a Cure." Frank takes coyotes people shoot, skins them and sells the hides, and the profit it makes is donated to the American Cancer Society. Kelly Lafferty Gerber | Kokomo Tribune

More Information

Coyotes are native to Indiana, though deforestation has increased their geographic range so they are found throughout the state, the Indiana Department of Natural Resources website states. INDOT says hunting coyotes should continue to be used as a way to control populations.

Coyotes may be harvested year-round on private property with written permission from the landowner. Landowners do not need a permit to snare, trap or shoot a coyote on his or her property, but a license is required to take a coyote on someone else's property.

Read more about coyotes [here](#).

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In 2013, a Miami County farmer also began matching dollar for dollar all the money they raised.

This year's coyote season saw more hunters participate than ever before, bringing in a record number of pelts.

One of those hunters was 74-year-old Terry Hoffman, who started participating back when Frank first started the charity.

Since 1991, Hoffman said he's been hunting coyotes with neighbors to reduce the population, since they were killing farmers' livestock.

He said they didn't know what to do with the animals once they'd been killed, but that changed when a friend told him about Frank's outreach.

"We just hunt them to get rid of them," Hoffman said. "I didn't like to see them going to waste when there were so many. But this is a way to put this all to a good cause."

Frank agreed the whole operation is a win-win. Hunters get rid of a nuisance predator, which the Indiana Department of Natural Resources classifies as an "unwelcome member of the native Indiana wildlife community" when they kill livestock or forage trash cans or Dumpsters.

At the same time, they can raise money for a good cause.

"This way, we get the coyotes and get a little money and save some cats and chickens, too," he said.

But it's no small task harvesting the coyotes. Frank said it takes him about an hour to skin, brush, wash and dry a pelt.

With 410 furs to do this year, it was a massive undertaking. Next year, Frank said, he plans on getting some help from North American Fur Auctions, which has agreed to prepare some of the coyotes at no cost.

"Coyotes for Charity" isn't a nonprofit, Frank said. It isn't an official organization or group. It's just a good cause that hunters have embraced over the last 12 years to help find a cure for cancer.

And that's pretty special, he said.

"Now that we're all donating to the same common cause, we're all in it together," Frank said. "It's a lot of comradery among the hunters. We're all in the same boat with this."

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