

Representative Mast

I support HB2709. Illegal hunting is a plague on Kansas; endangers our outdoor heritage and traditions, our honest sportsman, rural homeowners and their families. The fines and penalties should be increased. I really hope in the future we can do more to protect our sportsman and outdoor enthusiast. I was Beau Arndt's hunter education instructor.

With Respect. Phil Taunton, youth mentor, volunteer and co-author of the Kansas School Naturalist publication, Last Child on the Prairie.

From Last Child on the Prairie: www.kvoe.com. What's in Outdoors

Beau Arndt was raised in the country northwest of Emporia, Kansas. From an early age Beau loved the outdoors, nature and all of its wonders. As he matured, Beau grew especially fond of observing and learning about wildlife. He studied habits of all the animals and became an ethical hunter. Beau's favorite time of year was Christmas when he would delight in delivering jerky and other harvested game to friends and neighbors. He would say, "I love to see their faces light up when I bring them turkey and deer on Christmas Day."

The last deer season Beau enjoyed was so special to him. He donated his deer to the local homeless shelter to help fill their food pantry. Taking a friend on his first turkey hunt was just as special. His passion also included fishing and horseback riding. Beau enjoyed and took pride in showing others how to have fun in the Great Outdoors. Ten days before Christmas and three days before his nineteenth birthday, Beau was home after completing his first semester at Emporia State University. Beau was studying to be a biologist.

Early the next morning, Beau was elated to be with two close friends in goose blinds, waiting on thousands of circling geese to descend from the snow-laden sky. Then tragedy struck. A passing motorist stopped his pickup, took aim and fired into decoys that concealed Beau as he lay in the field. This illegal and unethical act took Beau from his family and friends. Several things have happened since Beau's incident. Within a few months the Kansas Wildlife and Parks' hunter education division created a hunter education DVD titled "Tragedy at Wright's Creek." It is now mandatory viewing in several states and foreign countries. The DVD portrays the day Beau was killed and other related issues that concern ethical hunting. Beau's family was determined his death would not be in vain. With the help of friends and donations from several local conservation groups including Hunt4Hunger (www.hunt4hunger.net), education scholarships in Beau's name are now established at Emporia State University and the Americus Recreation Organization.