

Governor's local hunt was a secret affair

By Joe Augustin

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KENYON — During the hoopla that surrounds the campaign season, Minnesota Gov. Tim Pawlenty took time to go hunting at a nearby farm.

Jim Braaten hosted the governor and a group of hunters on his land in Kenyon on Nov. 4, but not many people knew about the event until after the fact.

"The tough thing was that we needed to keep it a secret," Braaten said.

He said the main reason for keeping it a secret was for security purposes. In order to secure the event, each member of the hunting party was given special credentials and the perimeter of the land was patrolled by law enforcement.

But the precautions didn't spoil the event for Braaten, who thought the real significance of the opener was in the cel-

ebration of the Braaten farm, which has been passed down through generations for 150 years, "Way back when our first ancestors arrived, it was during October," Braaten said.

Because farming the land was not possible during the fall, Braaten said, they traded rifles with American Indians for venison.

"The thing that allowed them to survive was the trading," Braaten said. "It's neat because a lot of people don't know the history of the land they are hunting."

The tradition of the governor participating in the hunting opener was started by Pawlenty four years ago. Braaten said his farm was chosen because he has been a longtime member of the Minnesota Deer Hunters Association and they had recommended the site to the Department of Natural Resources.

Todd Rost was also a member of the

hunting party and said it was a unique event that was refreshing from the usual politics that are associated with a publicly elected official.

"The cool thing was politics went aside for a while," Rost said.

He also said that after the hunters came in from being out for four hours in the woods, Pawlenty played football with a few of the kids for 20 minutes.

"The kids were eating it up," he said.

Both Rost and Braaten agree that it was a successful event.

"All in all it was a very interesting experience," Braaten said.

And the weather on the opener turned out to be ideal as well.

"We couldn't have asked for a nicer weekend," Rost said.

— Staff writer Joe Augustin may be reached at 333-3135.



Jim Braaten (left) and Governor Tim Pawlenty discuss final plans before hunting on morning of Nov. 4. (Photo provided)