

NRA Youth Programs

By: David Brant

America's young people are our leaders of the future. The National Rifle Association (NRA) has long recognized that by providing youngsters with programs that encourage their safe, responsible, and enjoyable use of firearms, the NRA is helping to ensure the continuation of the shooting sports traditions and freedoms that we cherish today. The training that youngsters receive will stay with them the rest of their lives, and they will be able to pass on their safe enjoyment of the shooting sports to their children and grandchildren. As they begin participating in various shooting programs, youngsters will also discover the rich history of the shooting sports, and will be able to understand the meaning and practice of the Second Amendment.

In 1903, realizing the importance of involving youngsters in the shooting sports, the NRA adopted a resolution which declared that the NRA would work closely with schools to encourage rifle practice among America's youth. Subsequently, NRA Secretary Albert Jones sent letters to the presidents of all the major colleges and universities in the United States, plus the U.S. Military Academy and the U.S. Naval Academy, asking for the cooperation of these institutions in establishing rifle clubs. By 1913, the NRA oversaw rifle tournaments at 34 colleges and 18 military schools. The NRA also began directing its attention to public schools and by 1910 had succeeded in establishing 73 NRA-affiliated school rifle clubs.

The NRA also became involved in 1910 with the newly-formed Boy Scouts of America (BSA). The 1911 second edition of the *Boy Scout Handbook* made qualification in NRA's junior marksmanship program a prerequisite for obtaining a BSA merit badge in marksmanship.

In 1917, the Winchester Repeating Arms Company used the NRA's youth program as a rough model for its own Winchester Junior Rifle Corps (WJRC). The WJRC was a popular program, and both organizations subsequently agreed that the NRA would take over the WJRC in 1926 and blend the best features of both programs into a new, stronger NRA junior marksmanship training program.

In the following decades, the NRA continued to develop and expand its youth programs, and today plays a vital role in supporting numerous organizations that offer various gun safety, training, and competitive programs to youngsters across America. In addition to the Boy Scouts of America, these organizations include: 4-H, DeMolay, VFW, The American Legion, FFA, U.S. Jaycees, the National High School Rodeo Association,





the Police Athletic League (PAL), the National Guard, and Junior ROTC.

Although NRA youth programs are designed to educate all interested youngsters, it's worth noting that virtually every American Olympic shooter got a start in a youth program, either conducted by or supported by NRA. Medalists Mike Anti, Kim Rhode, Nancy Johnson and Launi Meili, just to quote a few recent examples, all have strong NRA connections, either through match experience, training or simply NRA membership. Matt Szramoski, manager of the NRA's Youth Programs Department in the Education and Training Division, succinctly explained the success and popularity of NRA's numerous youth programs. "The NRA is committed," said Matt, "to providing the safest and most diverse range of shooting programs for youths. We try to find the shooting activity that interests the youngster, rather than trying to find the youngster that fits the sport we like."

NRA's major youth programs are described below:

Youth Hunter Education Challenge

NRA's Youth Hunter Education Challenge (YHEC) provides an advanced hunter education course for young hunters under age 19. YHEC tests the young hunter's ability in eight hunting and outdoor skill events. These are: .22 rifle, shotgun, muzzleloader, archery, orienteering, hunter safety trail, wildlife identification, and a hunter safety exam. State and regional level YHEC programs draw an estimated 50,000 youths each year. Top ranked individuals advance to the annual NRA International Youth Hunter Education Challenge. For more information on the Youth Hunter Education Challenge and how you can participate, please call NRA Hunter Services at (703) 267-1500.

NRA Marksmanship Qualification Program

NRA Marksmanship Qualification Shooting is an informal, year-round activity for people of all ages. Qualification shooting is the ideal way to develop and build shooting proficiency by progressing through each skill level, from Pro-Marksman through Distinguished Expert. There are courses of fire for rifle, pistol, shotgun, and muzzleloaders, with patches, skill rockers, pins, medals, and certificates available for each discipline. For more information please call the NRA Qualification Coordinator at (703) 267-1505.

NRA Shooting Sports Camps

Through the NRA Shooting Sports Camp Program, people of various ages have the opportunity to learn gun safety, participate in shooting sports activities, learn a new discipline, or hone their skills. NRA Shooting Sports Camps are conducted through the collaborative efforts of the NRA, local-level shooting and sporting clubs and other organizations. There are a variety of different camp themes, such as Safety and Firearm Education Camps, Basic Shooting Camps, Competition Camps, Hunters Camps, NRA/ATA Youth Trapshooting Camps, Special Interest Camps, and Youth SportsFests. For more information please visit www.nrahq.org/youth.

Cooperative Youth Organizations Program

Youth organizations can become part of the NRA network of clubs. NRA affiliated clubs have access to a variety of resources,

programs, and training for youth participants and program leaders. Organizations that are affiliated with NRA include: the Boy Scouts Shooting Merit Badge Program, the 4-H Shooting Sports Program, the U.S. Jaycees BB Gun Tournament, the American Legion Junior Air Gun Tournament, the National Guard Junior Air Rifle Tournament, and the National High School Rodeo Association in addition to many high school teams and junior clubs. To learn more, contact the Youth Programs Department at (703) 267-1552 or for more information and a club affiliation form, contact the NRA Clubs and Associations Department at (800) NRA-CLUB.

NRA Junior Competitions

The NRA National Junior 3-Position Air Rifle Championships and Training Summit hosts over 200 youths ages 10 to 19. The competition involves three categories of shooting—Precision Air Rifle, Sporter Air Rifle, and Air Pistol—and is open to teams of junior shooters from NRA-affiliated state associations, and others. Competitors and coaches also attend seminars on the shooting sports and shooting techniques, and learn about opportunities to compete at the national and international levels, college scholarships, and other types of competition. Please contact John Venskoske, Jr. at (703) 267-1477 or by email at jvenskoske@nrahq.org.

Youth Education Summit

The Youth Education Summit (YES) program is an expense-paid educational experience in which qualified high school students travel to Washington D.C., and are treated to seven days of seminars and activities hosted by the NRA. YES students may meet their congressmen, tour Washington, D.C., and hear expert speakers on the Second Amendment and other constitutional matters. YES participants can compete for \$20,000 in college scholarships through the program and also receive gun safety and marksmanship training at a local range. Please direct questions to (800) 672-3888.

NRA Outstanding Achievement Youth Award

This award recognizes NRA Junior Members who take an active part in the shooting sports through individual participation and educational pursuits. By meeting the requirements to be eligible for the award, youths gain a greater sense of responsibility and an appreciation for the variety of shooting sports opportunities available. Youths who meet the eligibility requirements will receive a special medal, certificate and scholarships to celebrate their accomplishments. Award recipients will also be eligible for state and national awards. Please contact the NRA Youth Programs Department at (703) 267-1505 or email them at youth_programs@nrahq.org.

NRA Civil Rights Defense Fund Youth Essay Contest

The NRA Civil Rights Defense Fund (NRACRDF) sponsors an essay contest celebrating the Second Amendment as an integral part of the Constitution and the Bill of Rights. The theme

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Instant and Lasting Gratification

Why I became involved in the Shooting Sports

By: Emily Houston

The world-famous musical “Annie Get Your Gun” introduced a line to American culture that has a very personal meaning to me. In the show, Annie sings, “Anything you can do, I can do better...” This line epitomizes my intentions when I was first introduced to the shooting sports. My brother John, who is three years my senior, and my father would go the NRA Range every Sunday night to practice with the Acorns Junior Rifle Club. For a year, John learned to shoot small bore rifle and bonded with my dad, while I was stuck at home because I was “too little.” When I was eight, I decided that I wanted to be a part of their special relationship and convinced my dad to let me join the Acorns, too. Since that first Sunday night in September 1996, I have been a target shooter.

Beginning with small bore rifle, I learned to focus, concentrate, and be happy with each shot that found the 10-ring. Eventually, I also began shooting air rifle, and found quick success in the synergistic effect of shooting multiple rifle events. I began to shoot year around, competing in both indoor and outdoor matches. My scores weren’t very competitive but that didn’t dampen my enthusiasm. Over the years, I became more and more interested in this sport and practiced until I got to the point where I could have a good match just by shooting one good shot. After a few years, John stopped shooting competitively, but by that time, the friendly rivalry that existed between my older brother and I was no longer as important to me as was my desire to keep shooting and improving.

Shooting has brought so much into my life. I struggled in sports as a younger child but after attending the National Matches at Camp Perry in 1999, I knew I had found a lifetime pursuit in competitive target shooting. All of the competitors were friendly, helpful, and interesting, and I competed against men and women more than six times my age and didn’t come in last! Every year since that match I have improved as a shooter, an athlete, and even as a student. Now, as a junior in high school, I have been on several National Championship teams – including the first and only junior team to win the open small bore team matches



at the National Matches at Camp Perry in 2003 – and won several individual honors. I have won local, regional and state championships, placed third at the 2003 National Junior Olympic Air Rifle Championships, and earned eleven national records. Shooting has also influenced my performance in the classroom. I am a straight A student and have been since the seventh grade. My ability to focus, complete assignments, remain calm in stressful situations, and work to be the best is a skill derived from what I have learned through nearly ten years of competitive target shooting.

After nearly a decade of involvement in the shooting sports, I have developed an intense love for target shooting. I love going to shooting camps and competitions, meeting other shooters and visiting them throughout the year. I love traveling to the range, setting up my gear, adjusting my rifle. I love the feel of a shot when I know it will be a 10. It brings me immeasurable contentment just to fire one well-placed shot. I have not found that kind of gratification in any other facet of sport or life. Although open competition exists in the shooting sports, it is the internal desire to improve and shoot better that has kept me coming back shot after shot, day after day, year after year. Just as I worked and learned to shoot in the center when I was eight, I hope to be competing and shooting 10s when I am 88.



Photos taken by Daniel Feldbus: Emily Houston at the 3-P Smallbore competition in the National Rifle Associations (NRA) 2006 Nationals.

Rifle Silhouette

By: Tyler Kamp



My name is Tyler Kamp. I am 17 years old, a senior at Pinedale High School, and live and work on a ranch in Daniel, Wyoming. Rifle silhouette is a favorite hobby of mine and I love competing in it.

Rifle silhouette is all shot in the standing position at different distances at steel targets that must be knocked over. The targets are shaped as a chicken, javelina, turkey, and ram. Small bore is shot with .22 caliber rimfire at distances of 40, 60, 77, and 100 meters. High power is shot with centerfire rifles, .24 caliber or larger, at distances of 200, 300, 385, and 500 meters. In both small bore and high power there are two matches: one with a heavy gun and one with a hunter gun, with the main difference being weight. Any sights are allowed. Each small bore or high power match consists of 10 shots at each type of animal for a total of 40 shots per match. Rifle silhouette allows a spotter to watch the shots. The spotter tries to read the wind and watches where the hits and misses go to tell the shooter how to adjust their sights; so the spotter is very important. My Dad spots for me and I spot for my Dad. Also allowed is a loose fitting leather vest; no heavy shooting coats are allowed.

I started shooting small bore silhouette in 1999 when I was 10 years old. I started out at the very bottom of score classifications shooting a score of five out of 40, and have worked my way up to the top classification. My best score has been 36 out of 40. I started shooting high power silhouette in 2001 with a score of 10 out of 40. Again, I started out at the bottom of the score classifications and have worked my way up to the second to last classification. My best score has been 31 out of 40. I got started shooting silhouette through my Dad, who had already been shooting silhouette for quite

a few years before I started. I am really glad he introduced it to me and he continues to help me out a lot with it.

I've had quite a bit of success with rifle silhouette. As I said, I started out at the bottom of the score classifications. There are five classifications based on how well the shooter can shoot. Once a high enough score is shot, the shooter is then moved up one classification and can keep on moving up. In 2004, I made it up to the top of the classifications in small bore and have continued to do well there. I won the Wyoming State Small Bore Championships in 2005 and 2006 in the heavy gun, the sub-junior category at the 2003 National Small Bore Silhouette Championships, and the intermediate junior category at the 2004, 2005, and 2006 National Small Bore Silhouette Championships. At the 2006 National Small bore Silhouette Championships, I shot a 106 out of 120 (three match aggregate) which set a new intermediate junior record. I also got a 3rd place overall at the 2004 and 2006 National Small Bore Silhouette Championships, against all the competitors including adults. I've only recently started shooting high power well. At the 2005 and 2006 National High Power Silhouette Championships I won the intermediate junior category and I have won the 2006 Wyoming State High Power Championships.

From shooting rifle silhouette I have gained some knowledge and skills. I have learned to be patient in waiting for a good shot and that this game takes a lot of concentration. A big part of silhouette is the mental game, which makes it easy to get side tracked. It also teaches a person to become familiar and safe with firearms. I've been able to meet many great people too and silhouette is just a fun, exciting, and challenging hobby to me.



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Modern Action Shooting

By: Andy Fink

I split action shooting into two types: Western-action shooting, which was covered in Section 5 and Modern-action shooting. Modern-action shooting has a lot to offer juniors. There are a variety of shooting programs and opportunities and numerous organizations that have junior programs. It is fun, fairly easy to get into, and juniors can be competitive quite quickly.

What is modern-action shooting? First, it is time scored with a penalty for each miss or shot which does not enter the highest scoring area. Second, there are multiple targets set up usually in a particular scenario or stage layout and many times the targets are combinations of paper and steel. Third, there is movement. The shooter doesn't just stand or lay still, you are moving from firing position to firing position in order to position yourself for the combination of the most accurate and fastest shots. Many times you can not even see all of the targets from your starting point. Fourth, the participant shoots numerous rounds at each stage and there are many stages at a regular match, usually six to 12. I have seen as many shots as 10 on a stage and as many as 92 and there are probably some out there that are even higher. This provides the shooter with a lot of action and a lot of fun. It definitely gets the adrenalin pumping!

Juniors are especially good at moving from point-to-point quickly and being able to respond to different target situations. Shooting double-action revolvers and semi-automatic pistols comes easier than pulling out single-action revolvers in Western-action shooting. Many gun manufactures are taking an active interest in the junior market and developing specific firearms and accessories for young juniors. This includes those interested in the modern-action shooting sports.

All modern-action shooting sports that I am aware of involve modern handguns, from stock handguns right out of the manufacturer's box that are great for the beginner, to fancy tuned race guns that can easily set one back \$2,000 or more. There are usually a number of categories in each sport such as Limited (usually a manufacturer's basic gun without scoped sights), Unlimited (allowing full customization of the handgun), and different caliber classes. Some of the modern-action shooting sports require the use of three guns such as a revolver or semi-auto pistol, a semi-auto rifle like an AR-15 and a shotgun, either a pump or a semi-auto.

You can find out more information on modern action shooting sports by reading the articles in this section of Junior Shooters, visiting our website at www.juniorshooters.net, or by checking out the various organizations/competitions listed here.



Modern Action Shooting Organizations/Competitions

USPSA – www.uspsa.org

IPSC – www.ipsc.org

IDPA – www.idpa.com

Steel Challenge – www.steelchallenge.com

Bianchi Cup – www.nra.org

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