

ATA Article for July 2014

Greetings from Ontario, Canada.

By the time you read this article the short but intensive shooting season in the northeast states and provinces will be only a few weeks from the target year end (if you can imagine). Many of you will have a busy, perhaps hectic, shooting schedule. Take a moment please to invest in the future of our sport. Summer has the longest days, the nicest weather and for the most part, young people have the time and the interest in trying their hand at "trapshooting". You have the contacts and means to facilitate all of this. These young people are the future of our sport, they will help shape the "public perception" of firearm ownership and use. Give them a positive experience. It will take time and effort on your part but all of us could reap the benefits engendered by a young person that was thrilled with the experience.

Earlier this year Jamie Caldwell, one of our long-time Ontario shooters from Kippen, responded to an article I did on a "youth/new shooter initiative" by sharing his own experience. By way of background, Jamie and the folks at the Kippen Gun Club (a little north of London, Ontario) have a long history of attracting and keeping new shooters in our sport. But as Jamie observes, it does not come easily. They put an ad in the local paper with contact information offering folks the opportunity to try trapshooting at the club – no responses at all. The next year they tried again and specifically targeted 12 – 16 year olds. As opposed to a newspaper, they spread the word by talking to people far and wide. They offered targets, shells, a barbeque and (borrowed) guns and instruction all free of charge. Costs were offset by generous donors. Twelve youths showed up for the day.

There was an instructor for each shooter on the line and the club did a rotation that started with gun handling and line safety first and then progressed to the firing line. Many of these young people pursued the sport and it all started by people like Jamie pursuing an initiative. Well done Jamie.

Jamie reinforces what I have often said – if you have a neighbour kid watching you load your guns and paraphernalia into your vehicle in your driveway, don't be afraid to ask him or her if they would be interested in heading to the gun club someday and give it a try.

I am sure Jamie would be pleased to share other success stories which may help you and your club attract new/youthful members. Why do we tend to keep our sport one of the best kept secrets? Share it.

Paul Shaw

Ontario Delegate