To Field Day or Not to Field Day
Is It a Question of Safety?

Ethical Issues Related to Trail Cams

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The International Hunter Education Association – United States of America (IHEA-USA) is an organization involving some 55,000 instructors across the United States of America. The IHEA-USA is affiliated with the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies.

The Hunter & Shooting Sports Education Journal is the official publication of the International Hunter Education Association-United States of America. It is published four times annually (Spring, Summer, Fall, Winter) and distributed to more than 55,000 administrators and volunteer instructors in Canada, El Salvador, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, South Africa and the United States of America, that are responsible for education programs that total 650,000 new hunters annually. The purpose of the publication is to increase the skill and effectiveness of hunter education in administrators and instructors so they can improve the enthusiasm, safety, ethics and proficiency of their students as they embark on lifetime enjoyment of hunting and the shooting sports.

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Send all advertising materials to:
Focus Group, Inc.
2201 SW 152nd St., Suite #3
Burien, WA 98166
206-281-8520

Publisher: Focus Group, Inc.
Brian Thurston
Editor: Susie Kiefer
Graphic Design & Production:
Craig Robinson • Wireless Group

International Hunter Education Association-United States of America
Mission Statement:
Continuing the heritage of hunting worldwide by developing safe, responsible, knowledgeable and involved hunters.

This issue of the Journal made possible by:

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Vol. 18 No. 3 – Fall 2018
Cover Photo by Alaska Department of Fish & Game

2018 IHEA-USA Conference & Awards

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www.IHEA-USA.org
IHEA-USA’s mission is to continue the heritage of hunting worldwide by developing safe, responsible, knowledgeable, and involved hunters. Thanks to the efforts of many, we have made great strides in furthering our mission over the past several months.

As you know, one of the benefits of IHEA-USA is the reciprocity of hunter education across the United States. What you may not know is we also partner with other countries who have been implementing conservation programs and hunter education in their respective countries. For us, the North American Wildlife Conservation Model is our way of life; this is what we know hunting to be, at our very core. We believe in the fair chase, conservation of wildlife, and the conservation of habitat upon which it lives, as well as the ethics of hunting. However, the way hunting is regulated in other countries is not the same as ours, thus the standards of hunter education are different. For that reason, we partner with other countries who want to meet the basic standards of hunting education on a truly worldwide level, including: IHEA-Canada, IHEA-Mexico, and IHEA-South Africa. This year, we are happy to welcome IHEA-Australia as well as our newest U.S. Territory/State member, Guam!

Setting the Standard With Hunter Education

Setting national standards for hunter and bowhunting education has been at the forefront of our endeavors the past several years. The first standards to be updated, since their previous approval in 1999, were the IHEA-USA Hunter Education Standards starting in 2012, and were officially approved by a vote of membership on June 5, 2014. These standards and the process to develop future standards were created by the IHEA-USA Standards and Evaluations Committee, IHEA-USA Research Committee, IHEA-USA Executive Director, IHEA-USA Board, and Matt Dunfee with the Wildlife Management Institute. Once a draft of the standards was developed, it went to all state administrators for comment and review in advance of the national IHEA-USA conference and business meeting. The goal of these standards is to create a baseline for hunter education content so that what you receive in one state will carry over to the next, thus creating reciprocity with the hunter education certificate you receive at the end of your class.

Online Standards and Assessment

The next step was to create and vote upon national online standards and online assessment based upon the official IHEA-USA hunter education standards. The standards for IHEA-USA Online Assessment and Delivery were adopted by membership May 26, 2016, at the Vermont Annual Conference and Business Meeting.

Bowhunting Education Standards

After online standards, we worked with Marilyn Bentz and the National Bowhunter Education Foundation Board, to develop national Bowhunter Education Standards. These Standards were adopted unanimously, by membership, May 25th, 2017.

Putting It All Into Action

To begin the review of online course providers meeting our standards, we partnered with the National Association of State Boating Law Administrators (NASBLA), thanks to a grant from Cabela’s Outdoor Fund. We reached out to NASBLA for their expertise, as they approve similar courses for Boater Education. As the Board members work directly with different course providers in their respective states, we wanted to ensure a non-biased approach to course approval and contracted with a third-
part vendor who would evaluate and approve the online courses based on the approved standards. This contract and subsequent online course approval process was structured in the fall of 2017. Letters went out to our online course provider partners with application materials to expedite the process and help administrators and instructors understand which online vendors meet all the standards as set forth. Once a course and all application materials are submitted, the review begins. Upon approval, the online course can bear IHEA-USA’s approval for a period of three years. After that time, they must reapply for approval and meet any standards as updated by IHEA-USA at that time. Each state still individually determines the vendor to provide the hunter education materials for their state. This process helps a state to streamline their decision-making and expedites the review process of the education online platform. We are pleased to announce the IHEA-USA approval of standards for OUTDOORsmart Hunter Education, the NRA Hunter Education Course, Kalkomey’s Hunter Ed online course, and Fresh Air Educators HUNTERcourse.com.

Interactive Standards
Since our online standards were approved, technology has continued to advance and interactive online courses are being developed in addition to non-interactive courses (current standards). Interactive courses have several differences to the current online delivery, one of which eliminates the need for timed pages and several other adjustments that are not necessary in the non-interactive online course platform. Therefore, IHEA-USA tasked the Standards and Evaluations Committee in 2018 to develop standards for interactive courses as an addendum to the current online delivery and assessment standards. We will continue to work with the expertise from NASBLA and subject experts to provide standards for interactivity in the future.

Trapper Education
The IHEA-USA Board and the Standards Committee is also partnering with the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (AFWA) to update the national trapper education standards. We hope to have these standards to the state administrators for approval in May of 2019. All the standards are available for viewing at www.ihea-usa.org.

As you can see, we have been diligently working behind the scenes to improve the base standard of hunter education without compromising the individual needs of the state, while allowing for the creative process of delivery that each of you, as instructors, bring to your classroom. We truly appreciate the dedication of volunteers to carry forth hunter education to the next generation. I wish you all a great fall teaching in the classroom and a safe and enjoyable hunting season.
Thank you to the many of you who have welcomed me to the IHEA-USA and to the world of hunter education and safety. I am happy to have an opportunity to contribute to the future of hunting and the hunting culture.

As I begin my service, I am continuously struck by how much opportunity exists under the umbrella of IHEA-USA, and all that it stands for today. For those of you in the Hunter Education and Safety world, I am not telling you anything you don’t already know; you are in many ways at the gateway or entrance into the hunting culture. You are the first to engage with the “new customers” of the hunting industry year after year.

One of my goals will be to expand how we engage this new customer (and yes, I do see them as customers or potential customers). Most of the future of hunting and the industry will come to depend on these new customers someday and how we engage with them now matters a great deal. There is no question (in my mind) that we are providing a high-quality hunter education process today. Nowhere on this planet does anything compare and the results speak volumes. What we have to ask ourselves is beyond the hunting safety aspects—are we providing enough? Much of the feedback and stats from the hunting industry suggests there is more we can offer without compromising current standards and practices.

I have hunted for over 55 years now. I don’t claim to know or understand everything, but the one thing I am acutely aware of nowadays is this world is changing rapidly. This is not something I am really excited about, but it is happening with or without me. As a result, we are faced with looking at doing many things differently today. My view is we can think and act differently without compromising quality. What do I mean specifically? Well, as I am new to your world of Hunter Education and Safety, I will reserve my comments at least for this column as I continue to dig into IHEA-USA and talk with many of you and our Board to get a bigger picture. I don’t want to prejudice anyone’s thinking or perceptions in my early stages of getting started.

What I will say is that I see the glass more than half full in many ways. All of you who make up the American Hunter Education system can be very proud of what you do and deliver. As I said earlier, the United States has the most successful Hunter Education and Safety system/process on the planet. I believe we can build on this successful system and make it more engaging and beneficial not only for the Hunter Education student but for the millions of new hunters we touch and influence. In my previous job I had the pleasure of working with several state wildlife agencies. I have a great appreciation for the jobs and responsibilities they face every day (much of which is a very thankless job I would add). From these relationships, I see and hear some of the greatest challenges the hunting industry/culture faces. A great deal of these challenges are related in some form to “our customers” and customer service. We can help play a more active role in this process. We don’t have the cure for everything, but we do have a greater role to play, and it is my intention to get us there.

Again, thanks to those of you who have reached out with emails and calls. I want to hear your perspectives. My email is dallen@ihea-usa.org. The hunting culture is a very high priority in my life, personally and professionally. I care about our wildlife system and I care deeply that it remains healthy. We have a role to play and I am happy to be here with all of you to contribute.
letsGoShooting.org was created to be a go-to resource for all things target shooting and firearms safety. Those new to firearms and the shooting sports, especially those who haven’t yet taken their first shots or purchased their first firearm, will find a wealth of information about the various target sports, firearms retailer listings and maps showing area ranges, shooting and safety tips, and information on finding instruction. More experienced shooters will also find LetsGoShooting.org to be an invaluable tool, with a library of videos and articles, links to parent organizations for dozens of competitive shooting sports, and featured news about target shooting and firearms.

“LetsGoShooting.org is a great resource for anyone interested in learning more about the shooting sports,” said Laura Springer, NSSF Director, Web Strategy and Development. “Our goal is to provide everyone—from beginners to experienced competitors and everyone in between—with everything they need to get started, to invite someone new, and to find the tools they need to make their next trip to the range the best experience it possibly can be.”

**Highlights**

Open the home page on LetsGoShooting.org, and a wealth of shooting information is readily apparent. What will you discover? How about:
What to Expect at the Range: Tips for shooters who have never been to a firearms range

Find a Range: LetsGoShooting.org is geo-location enabled, so the Find a Range function automatically highlights the firearms ranges in your immediate area. Want to shoot someplace new or try a new sport? Punch in a city and state or a zip code in the search bar and hit “Search,” and if you really want to narrow it down, the “Advanced Search” lets you choose from indoor or outdoor ranges, NSSF Member or non-member ranges, ranges that allow airguns, muzzleloader, or have simulator training, and even those that allow RV and camper sites, have women and youth programs, onsite lodging, hunter education and organized competition, among other criteria.

Featured Retailers: Our highlights bar here features some NSSF’s Premium Retailers, some of the best of the best, but if you don’t have one in your area, there are hundreds of reputable, friendly firearms retailers across the country that can be found under the “Search Where to Buy” tab. Like the “Find a Range” section, “Search Where to Buy” is geo-located enabled, so you’ll automatically find a list of those nearest you. Traveling somewhere and need to stock up on ammo or need to buy a new range bag? Just punch in your zip code and a new list will populate.

Share Your Experience: Tell us and all your friends what you’re doing on the range today! Post your pics, your scores, and your perfect groups on target with our social media links to Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram. We may even feature you on LetsGoShooting.org!

Latest News: Find a history of the M1 Garand or the Winchester Model ’94, what it takes to shoot High Power rifle competition, and all the gear and sports trending on the range today.

Resources: Boy oh boy do we have shooting resources! Tap the menu bar in the upper left-hand corner and click on the “Resources” link that appears in the dropdown. There you’ll find dozens of videos.
on everything from basic safety to handgun, rifle, and shotgun skills tips and various shooting sports competitions in action. Each is tagged with an “experience level”—Novice, Intermediate, or Advanced—so you can find the tips and subject best suited to your current shooting skill level and those beyond to give you something to work towards.

Get Active
Perhaps the most important feature of the new LetsGoShooting.org is found under the “Get Active” tab at the upper right-hand corner of the home page. You’ll find instant access to the sports you want to be involved in—trap, action pistol, skeet, high power rifle, and more—and experienced shooters will find an array of tips to help them introduce a friend or family member to the shooting sports for the first time.
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The National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation (Survey) has been conducted since 1955, and is one of the oldest and most comprehensive continuing recreation surveys. The Survey collects information on the number of anglers, hunters, and wildlife watchers, how often they participate, and how much they spend on their activities in the United States (p. vii). The final report of the 2016 Survey became available in Spring 2018.

Gregory Sheehan, Principal Deputy Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, summarized the results of the new Survey: “In 2016, more than 103 million Americans—a staggering 40 percent of the U.S. population 16 years and older—participated in some form of fishing, hunting, or other wildlife-associated recreation such as birdwatching or outdoor photography. And in doing so, we spent an estimated $156.9 billion on equipment, travel, licenses, and fees. These expenditures represent almost 1 percent of the nation’s Gross Domestic Product—creating and supporting thousands of jobs and communities across the nation” (p. vi).

The Survey defines “hunters” as: “sportspersons who only hunted plus those who hunted and fished. Hunters include not only licensed hunters using rifles and shotguns, but also those who have no license and those who engage in hunting with archery equipment, muzzleloaders, other primitive firearms, or pistols or handguns. Four types of hunting reported are: (1) big game, (2) "While hunter numbers have not been this low since 1965, they are enthusiastic spenders at $2,300 per hunter, which is more than wildlife watchers or anglers spend per person.”

| 2011–2016 Hunting Participants, Days, and Expenditures (U.S. population 16 years and older: Numbers in thousands) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 2011 | 2016 | 2011–2016 percent change |
| **Hunters, total** | 13,674 | 11,453 | -16 |
| Big game | 11,570 | 9,208 | -20 |
| Small game | 4,506 | 3,505 | -22 |
| Migratory bird | 2,583 | 2,353 | -9 |
| Other animal | 2,168 | 1,315 | -39 |
| **Days, total** | 281,884 | 184,021 | -35 |
| Big game | 212,116 | 132,665 | -37 |
| Small game | 50,884 | 38,306 | -25 |
| Migratory bird | 23,263 | 15,621 | -33 |
| Other animal | 34,434 | 12,375 | -61 |
| **Hunting, total (2016 dollars)** | **$35,309,375** | **$26,025,056** | **-26** |
| Trip-related | 11,150,672 | 9,196,245 | -18 |
| Equipment, total | 14,950,564 | 12,755,917 | -15 |
| Hunting equipment | 8,280,007 | 7,383,871 | -11 |
| Auxiliary equipment | 1,974,022 | 2,018,696 | 2 |
| Special equipment | 4,696,536 | 3,353,350 | -29 |
| Other | 4,920,141 | 4,072,894 | -56 |

* Not statistically different from zero at the 95 percent confidence level.
"Note: 2011 was the first year plantings were included. Planting expenditures are not included in the Other category to maintain comparability to Survey years prior to 2011."
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small game, (3) migratory bird, and (4) other animals. Since many hunters participated in more than one type of hunting, the sum of hunters for big game, small game, migratory bird, and other animals exceeds the total number of hunters” (p.2).

The 2016 Survey estimates the total number of hunters in the U.S. to be 11.5 million, which is down from the 2011 Survey estimate of 13.7 million hunters. This decline is not surprising to those of us involved with the conservation community, and it emphasizes the importance of R3 (recruitment, retention, and reactivation) efforts and partnerships. Total hunting expenditures in 2016 were estimated to be $26.2 billion compared to $33.7 billion in 2011. “While hunter numbers have not been this low since 1965, they are enthusiastic spenders at $2,300 per hunter, which is more than wildlife watchers or anglers spend per person,” said Richard Aiken, an economist with the National Survey Branch at the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Target shooters and recreational archery participants were included for the first time in the 2016 Survey. An estimated total of 32 million people six years and older went target shooting with firearms, and 12.4 million Americans six years and older engaged in archery activities in 2015 (p.4). To download a copy of the 2016 National Survey, please visit online at: https://wsfrprograms.fws.gov/Subpages/NationalSurvey/reports2016.html

Portions of this article were excerpted from the 2016 Survey. Funding for the Survey is from the Multistate Conservation Grant Program, authorized by the Sport Fish and Wildlife Restoration Acts.

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2018 IHEA-USA

Conference & Awards

The 2018 IHEA-USA annual conference in Anchorage, Alaska had a great mix of Hunter Education Administrators and volunteer instructors who were able to attend. Attendees were treated to an outdoor field day at the Alaska Wildlife Conservation Center and the Rabbit Creek Shooting Park to experience activities such as bear firearm safety training, an atlatl competition, an Alaska Hunter Education Field Course, and much more. There were many educational sessions throughout the conference and a highlight of the conference is always the presentation of the annual IHEA-USA Awards.

Professional of the Year Award: This award is presented to an individual who symbolizes the highest level of achievement among wildlife/conservation agency employees in North America for outstanding and dedicated service to the IHEA-USA, Hunter Education, and the sport of hunting.

Award Sponsor: National Rifle Association
Presented to: Marty Eby
Presenter: Megan Wisecup, Iowa

Gladney Davidson Award: This is the highest award given to an individual or organization that has made significant contributions to the field of hunter education that exhibits excellence in hunter education and those involved with its programs. Brian Thurston, Publisher of Hunter’s Handbook and The Hunter & Shooting Sports Education Journal, began working closely with the IHEA in 1991 and has had a dedicated vision for hunter education for the past 27 years. Brian served on the IHEA-USA Foundation Board and has been innovative in getting the IHEA-USA moving forward with partnerships and helped make the IHEA-USA what it is today.

Presented to: Brian Thurston, Focus Group, Inc.
Presenter: James Reed
Hunter Education Volunteer Instructor of the Year Award: This award is presented to an individual (or family instructor team) who has significantly advanced the cause of safe hunting on a voluntary basis through extraordinary service in training or education.

Award Sponsor: Federal Premium Ammunition (Vista Outdoor)
Presented to: Marsha Womack (California)
Presenters: Jake Edson, Communications Manager Vista Outdoor & Shawn Olague (CA)

Hunter Education Volunteer Instructor Hall of Fame: This award honors VOLUNTEER Hunter Education instructors, either active, retired, or deceased who exhibits(ed) outstanding traits or provided services above and/or beyond the call of duty and exceeds the general efforts that helped to improve the Hunter Education movement in their respective jurisdiction and/or for IHEA-USA. This award is intended to recognize Hunter Education volunteers for their efforts supporting Hunter Education over the course of their lives.

(Three Inductees)
Presented to: Tim McCormick (right)
Presenter: James Reed (OR)

Presented to: Carl Edmiston (bottom right)
Presenter: Ginamaria Smith (AK)

James D. (J.D) Crawford (not pictured)
**Dr. Ed Kozicky Award:** Dr. Ed Kozicky, the first Volunteer Executive Vice President of the IHEA, epitomized the essence of hunting heritage and led early efforts to educate hunters across North America. Displaying the “Coyote Symbol,” because Dr. Kozicky loved the challenge of hunting them, the recipient is selected by the President of the IHEA-USA. This award is given to an individual or organization that assists the President of the IHEA-USA in a manner that exceeds a general effort and goes above and beyond the call of duty.

**Recipient: Susan Langlois (MA) (not pictured)**

**Professional Hall of Fame Award:** Award is presented to any individual who is active, retired, or deceased who exhibits(ed) outstanding traits that have helped to improve the Hunter Education movement or the IHEA-USA in a manner that exceeds the general effort.

(Two Inductees)
Presented to: Tim Beck (Indiana) (left)
Presented to: David Windsor (Illinois) (right)

**Host State Award:** Award given to the host state for outstanding work in putting on the IHEA-USA conference.

**Award Recipient:** Alaska Department of Fish and Game Hunter Information & Training Program Staff

**IHEA-USA Service Award:** This award is given to an individual of the IHEA-USA for outstanding contributions, assistance, and/or efforts above and beyond the call of duty to further the cause of Hunter Education.

(Two Recipients)
Presented to: John Sears (right)
Presenter: Melissa Neely (NY)

Presented to: Warren “Ed Goodson” (bottom right)
Presenter: Melissa Neely (NY)

**IHEA-USA Executive Director’s Award:** This award is given to an individual who has gone above and beyond the call of duty to further the cause of the IHEA-USA and its mission.

**Award Recipient: Michael Brooks (not pictured)**
IHEA-USA Hunter Education Administrator/Coordinator of the Year Award: This new award is given to a Hunter Education administrator/coordinator for their efforts above and beyond the call of duty to further the cause of Hunter Education.

Award Sponsor: Kalkomey
Presented To: Ricky Morris (Iowa)

IHEA-USA Innovations in Technology Award: Presented to any individual, group, or member of industry that exhibited outstanding support of the IHEA-USA and its mission by developing better ways of delivery of the hunter education program through technological advances. This effort may be newly-developed, revised, unique, unusual, active, and innovative in fostering new delivery methods in hunter education. Any individual, group, or member of industry may receive this award annually.

Award Sponsor: Weatherby
Presented to: Powderhook
Award Accepted by: Marty Hogan
Presenter: Megan Wisecup (IA)

According to Eric Dinger, CEO of Powderhook, receiving the award from the hunter education community is confirmation of the power of mentoring, but also evidence of the strength of maintaining consistent messages and support at every stage of the development of a hunter.

“It’s crucial for us to have a strong partnership with IHEA-USA, because it’s in their certification courses where many people discover their hunting passion,” says Dinger. “Receiving this award from such a prominent group in the outdoor space and being recognized for all the work our small staff has been able to accomplish is truly an honor.”

—Eric Dinger, CEO of Powderhook

Conference attendees enjoying one of the numerous and educational presentations.
IHEA-USA Industry Award: This award is presented to any member of industry that exhibited outstanding support of the IHEA-USA and its mission. This effort should have been active and innovative in fostering new ideas in Hunter Education and that, by virtue of personal staff efforts, professional advice, or financial assistance, has helped the Hunter Education movement in a superior way. Recipients may be selected more than once.

Presented to: Promatic

IHEA-USA Special Award: This award is given to an individual that has supported the hunter education community, and has gone above and beyond the call of duty to further the cause of IHEA-USA and its mission.

Presented to: Paulette Lubke, IHEA-USA Office Mgr.
Presenter: James Reed

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6. Special early bird invitations to IHEA-USA events (www.ihea.com).
7. Exclusive “Member Only” opportunities to purchase significantly discounted merchandise and closeouts offered by hunting and firearms manufacturers and distributors (www.ihea.com).
8. Liability Insurance-Individual memberships of the IHEA-USA are provided with Volunteer Liability Insurance up to $1,000,000 per occurrence. This policy provides protection for a bodily injury or a property damage liability claim arising out of the performance of the registered volunteers’ duties. Applicable to USA Only.

In addition to the benefits listed above, each new IHEA-USA Lifetime $450 Membership will include:
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HAWKEYE COMPACT

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Over the past several years, whether to have a field day component as a requirement for the online Hunter Education certification has been a controversial topic among Hunter Education Administrators across the country. The purpose of this article is not to establish whether the component should or should not be required, but more to provide insight on how Indiana came to the decision not to require a field day and how that decision impacted the number of incidents in Indiana.

Indiana decided to start its online Hunter Education certification in the fall of 2004 and went “live” in 2005. We chose to limit the online options to the same vendor that provided our printed materials. The rationale behind the decision on vendors was to provide consistency across the Hunter Education platform in Indiana. It was understood the content standards, established by IHEA, was met by all the vendors and the information provided would be similar. By utilizing the same vendor for print and online, we were ensuring the information was exactly the same. Having the exact same information in the classroom and the online course allowed for proper analysis of the impact the online course would have on our incidents. If we had different or multiple vendors, we would have to determine the various differences in order to make the same analysis. After justification of only having the one vendor and agreement on the age being for individuals over the age of eleven, we had to decide on the field day requirement.

In choosing to require the field day component or not, we had to discuss why we were moving to an online course. Indiana initially incorporated the online course because of the large number of individuals needing to attend a class in order to purchase a license. The issue was not the number of classes we were holding but the request for the classes were coming in November, just weeks, or sometimes days, before opening deer season. A time when our officers are swamped and our volunteer instructors are hunting. When we inquired as to why the person had not taken the classes offered earlier in the year, we received the “it wouldn’t fit in our schedule” or “I got busy and forgot about it” response. The classroom course required students to be at a particular place, at a particular time, and for a certain duration. The online course would eliminate these three obstacles. The student could take an online course anywhere the Internet would connect, the student could take the course whenever the student wanted, and the student would have the required hours due to the course being timed. Last-minute class requests could be directed to the online course. But if we required a field day, the student would have to still be at a particular place, at a particular time, and for an established duration. The online course would eliminate these three obstacles. The student could take an online course anywhere the Internet would connect, the student could take the course whenever the student wanted, and the student would have the required hours due to the course being timed. Last-minute class requests could be directed to the online course. But if we required a field day, the student would have to still be at a particular place, at a particular time, and for a certain duration, even if minimal. The reasoning for having an online course would be overridden by a component of the course. This would be strike one against having a field day.

If we had a field day, what would it look like? We looked at the top two...
causes of hunter incidents in Indiana: treestand falls and failure to properly identify your target. We would discuss each topic in turn to decide what measurement would be used to establish adequate knowledge and understanding to prevent these incidents. We found that everything we were going to explain to the student was already covered in the online course. Wear a full-body harness, attach before leaving the ground, stay attached until you’re back on the ground, keep your finger off the trigger, don’t point the firearm at anything you don’t intend to shoot, and ensure your target and what is beyond it. This would be strike two against having a field day. Finally we discussed using the field day to emphasize the highlights of the course, the important parts. What is not important? If it is not important, why are we teaching it? This would be the third strike against the field day. Knowing the decision would be controversial, an additional restriction was placed on the online course. You had to be a resident of the State of Indiana. All we could do was wait to see the results of our decision.

We jump forward to 2015. Indiana has utilized the online course without the requirement of a field day for ten years (2005 to 2014). It was time to compare some numbers. Overall, we did not experience an increase in hunting incidents. I pulled all the hunting incident reports from 2005 through 2014. I researched all the individuals involved with an incident that were required to have hunter education. The requirement would be individuals born after 1986 and required a hunting license to hunt. We were surprised to learn that eighty percent (80%) of the incidents involved individuals certified by taking the traditional classroom course. Only twenty percent (20%) involved individuals certified through the online course without a field day. Three out of four incidents involved students from the classroom course. Is the online course safer than a traditional classroom course? Absolutely not! The results were exactly what we expected. Of the total number of certifications in Indiana, 80% are classroom and 20% are online. The exact information was provided to both groups and the incidents were equivalent.

As stated at the beginning of the article, the purpose of this article is not to sway opinion as much as it is to provide background information and insight. Indiana is a huge supporter of traditional classes and we steer our students to an online course only as a last resort. As your state moves forward, I do have a few points for you to ponder. Is your state program providing your students consistent information, whether in the classroom or online? Do some of the requirements within your program have advantages that do not outweigh the disadvantages? Is your state doing things the best way or the way it has always done them? I tell our instructors constantly that if we are not continuing to improve our programs, we are losing ground. We must recognize our customers and adjust our programs to be something they will buy. Is it hands-on, lecture, online, interactive, or a combination of these? If you think outside the box, you will never get caught in it. If we want to connect with someone other than traditional hunters, we better stop thinking like them.
Ethical Issues Relating to Trail Cameras

By Michael G. Sabbeth, Esq.

Technology has a tendency to be ahead of the curve in the evolution of law and ethics. As an example, the phone is changing hunting practices and ethics profoundly, and legislation and ethical analysis are organizing furiously to catch up. I fear trail cameras and the phone will change hunting, and fishing also, for the worse, and given human nature, the changes will be irreversible. To illustrate the power of the phone, I share this anecdote. A friend shot a magnificent lion in South Africa. Within minutes of the kill, even before the animal was loaded onto the hunting vehicle, guides at a hunting convention in the USA were exhibiting photos of the lion, proclaiming, “We got this lion five minutes ago.” “I know where to get big cats like this one!”

Jan Manning, my dear friend and unsurpassed hunter education instructor, routinely sends me information relating to ethical issues in hunting. We know that cameras can save data on SD cards and that live-action cameras can send continuous data to a phone or other device and record the transmissions. A few days ago, he sent the article, New Trail Camera Regulation Now in Effect. The article addresses the use of trail cameras and distributing GPS coordinates of animals, and informed of the new seasonal restrictions on the use of trail cameras. Here are parts of the NDOW statement:

The use of trail cameras…and the issues surrounding their use have all continued to escalate…Proponents of the regulation raised several significant issues of concern including the growing commercialization of animal location data. New internet businesses have begun buying and selling GPS location data of animals captured on trail cameras…cameras and hunters not only disrupt the animal’s ability to obtain water…not for placement of a technological device at an animal concentration site that potentially makes it easier to kill trophy animals.

The new trail camera regulation: a person shall not place, maintain, or use a trail camera or similar device on public land, or private land without permission from the land owner; from August 1 to December 31 of each year, or if the camera is capable of transmitting the images or video, it shall not be used from July 1 to December 31... unfortunately, the use of cameras have been exploited far beyond most sportsmen’s definition of reasonable.

Arizona has begun to address issues with game cameras when “taking or aiding in the taking of wildlife.” Its Game and Fish Commission voted to prohibit live-action cameras.

The Arizona commission defines the live-action trail camera “as an unmanned device capable of transmitting images, still photographs, video or satellite imagery, wirelessly to a remote device such as, but not limited to, a computer, smartphone or tablet. This does not include a trail camera that records photographic or video data for later use (such as on an SD card), provided the device is not capable of transmitting wirelessly.”


Colorado has begun to address these issues. As of this writing, no Colorado law specifically addresses trail cameras. Colorado law does address using the Internet and drones. Per the Colorado Parks and Wildlife 2018 Big Game regulations, it is illegal to:

1. Use the Internet or other computer-assisted remote technology while hunting or fishing. This includes unmanned or remote-control drones used to look for wildlife. Hunters and anglers must be physically present in the immediate vicinity while hunting and fishing.

I share some thoughts regarding the Colorado law. Without much brain strain, the thoughtful reader can easily identify ways to evade this law. It is illegal to “Use the Internet or other computer-assisted remote technology while hunting or fishing.” Fine! How about ten minutes before hunting or fishing? That’s legal. Also, the legislation does not limit the hunter once the hunter has the data. Only a map is now needed to find the animals, not the Internet. Legislation has barely begun to tip-toe into all permutations of human behavior regarding use of trail cameras, the Internet, and phones. Ethical consensus is lacking.

Two large and distinct categories of use of these technologies arise, each presenting different ethical analyses. One category is the use of trail cameras
and phones by the actual hunter to gain information regarding the location of animals. The second category is the third-party non-hunter acquiring the data to sell to hunters. Yet again, the conflict of ‘is it legal’ versus ‘is it ethical’ arises like a monster from the swamp.

Should a technology be made illegal because it can be abused? Should a technology be made illegal knowing it is difficult to enforce? Should a technology permitted for use by the actual hunter be made illegal when used commercially by a non-hunter? These are only a few of the mind-numbing questions that regulators and ethicists must address before providing rational ethical policies and arguments.

Addressing the first category of technology users, the hunter using his or her own technology gains an unearned advantage over the animal when that data is transmitted. Steve Hall, Hunter Education Coordinator, Texas Parks & Wildlife Department, astutely noted the consequential loss of bonding of the hunter with the environment, the animals, indeed, with Nature. The thrill of the hunt, the investment of work, effort, the risk of not finding an animal, the sense of uncertainty, indeed, the core characteristic of the hunting quest, are all subverted by technology. Envision an opening day and everyone is there! No more figuring out where the animals might be. It’s not hunting anymore; it’s combat.

Perhaps drawing upon the writings of Ortega y Gasset, Hall continued: “It is too easy to forget that we don’t hunt to kill as much as we kill to have hunted.” To the extent the technology gives the hunter a grossly unfair advantage over the animal while subverting the virtues of hunting, the more persuasive argument can be made that the technologies are unethical, even though any or all of them may be legal.

The anecdote presented in the beginning of this article helps guide an ethical analysis of the second category of technology users. Hunters remote—in every sense of the word—from the hunting experience gain an unearned advantage in taking an animal and when the non-hunters leverage the information for commercial use. To make my point more impactful, I share real-life consequences explained to me by Stephen LeBlanc, internationally-renowned wildlife sculptor and acclaimed hunter. LeBlanc told me about schools of large halibut in Alaska being wiped out because the GPS coordinates of the fish were transmitted instantaneously. “Boom!” he said. “You get the fish! Boats and planes go directly to the coordinates. The fish cannot escape.”

LeBlanc predicts the coordinate issue will have the most impact on extremely expensive hunts, such as sheep and goat hunting. Not only is the technology sophisticated, but so are the people selling it. It’s a small world at the top of the hunting food chain. Top sheep outfitters know which hunter needs which animal or animals to complete a grand slam or the unique trophy he or she has been seeking. To a hunter willing to spend $300,000 for a sheep hunt, paying $15,000 or so for coordinates is just an expensive dinner. An incidental ethical issue arises because the seller of the information can avoid all liability: he will not be present on the hunt and he can sell the information from a jurisdiction where the sale is not expressly illegal.

The future may contain some unwelcome developments for all hunters. I can foresee that all hunting licenses will have in the fine print that the license holder has agreed to waive probable cause for and gives consent to a game warden or other state agent to seize a phone or other electronic device. “Show me your license and your phone,” may well become a standard request.

Challenging days will confront the hunting community, all because of cameras and phones.

Michael Sabbeth is a lawyer, consultant, writer, and lecturer based in Denver, Colorado. His forthcoming book, The Path of the Honorable Hunter: The Young Hunter’s Call to Action, will soon be available for purchase. Visit his website: www.thehonorablehunter.com. He can be reached via email at michael@thehonorablehunter.com.
Champions of Hunter Education - Jim Mershon

Everyone who hunts, shoots, or enjoys the outdoors owes hunter education instructors a debt of thanks. These instructors teach safe and ethical hunting and conservation, among numerous other topics, and what they teach is passed on by their students so the ripple of education continues to spread and, consequently, our treasured hunting and outdoor heritage passes from one generation to the next.

In recognition of the contribution hunter education instructors make, Gallery of Guns annually recognizes six outstanding hunter education instructors, whose dedication and achievements have stood out even among the thousands of like-minded, dedicated legion of instructors who generously commit their time and resources to this great cause.

“Hunter education instructors are the backbone supporting our nation’s great hunting heritage,” said Bill Bennett, director of marketing for Davidson’s and GalleryofGuns.com. “Without them and the thousands of hunters they educate each year, we would face losing the traditions we all hold dear, and our country and our wildlife, habitat, and natural world would suffer tremendously.”

In this issue, we highlight three Gallery of Guns Champions of Hunter Education. Three others were featured in our previous issue.
Jim Mershon has been a hunter education instructor since the fall of 1978, so the 40th anniversary of his certification is at hand. Forty years of consistently teaching two to three hunter ed sessions each year means Mershon has had a personal hand in educating many hundreds of new hunters.

“Jim embodies the volunteer spirit at the core of Montana’s hunter education program,” said Dillon Tabish, Regional Hunter Education Coordinator for Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks. “He has spent countless hours devoted to hunters of all ages and abilities to preserve a cherished tradition and heritage in Montana. And he’s done it with wit and a smile that makes his instruction especially memorable for all students.”

Tabish, who nominated Mershon for the award, said Mershon “has shared his passion and abilities for hunter education beyond the typical classroom setting.” Among other things, Mershon has operated an educational Laser Shot booth at the Sanders County Fair in Plains; ran a booth representing hunter education at a local Horn Show in Trout Creek; and was the shooting sports director at two different Montana Council Boy Scout Camps that incorporated hunter education materials and examples. He’s also been a certified bowhunter education instructor for five years.

Mershon, who retired from the U.S. Forest Service as a District Ranger in 1999 after 41 years of service, said he got into hunter education to pass along what he’d been taught. “I became a hunter education instructor to pass along what my father had instilled in me about the responsibility and fun associated with shooting and hunting,” he said.

His work as a District Ranger with natural resources and the local community was a natural fit for hunter education, he said.

“Hunter education is important to me as an opportunity to work with local youth, especially Boy Scouts,” he said. “Boys and girls of this age seem to be the most able to understand and respond to the objectives of the material we present.”

Mershon is straight-forward about his goals for hunter education. “I strive to instill in my students a deep appreciation of the responsibilities of both firearm use and the principals of how hunting is an integral part of wildlife management,” he said.

And, he’d like to enlist students’ parents in the educational process. “I hope my efforts in hunter education will go well beyond the basics of firearm handling and shooting safety,” he said.

“I strongly believe my objectives in hunter education can only be fully realized if parents and guardians of the students are involved in the training and can therefore reinforce the total firearm/hunting interactions we present as instructors.”

For his efforts over the 40 years, Mershon this year received a rare Montana Hunter Education Challenge Coin as a reflection of his devotion to the state’s thriving hunter ed program, Tabish said.

Mershon, a certified NRA Range Safety Officer, is also an expert instructor in firearm safety and proper use, Tabish said. “When a group of local mothers of hunter education students expressed concern about the dangers of firearms, Jim hosted an evening session that included educational and information learning opportunities,” Tabish said. “The women learned how to safely handle rifles and handguns and fired them both in exercises. The event was very well received.”

Mershon, a life member of the Noxon Rod and Gun Club, which supports the Montana hunter ed program through free use of ranges, firearms, and ammunition, also received a jacket from the Montana Game Wardens Association for excellence in service as a hunter education instructor.
A relatively recent addition to the ranks of hunter education instructors, Dave Foster has made a significant impact.

“When Dave becomes involved in a project, he can hardly contain his enthusiasm,” Kansas Hunter Education Program Coordinator Kent Barrett said in nominating Foster.

Foster, a strength and conditioning physical education instructor as well as head football and head track coach at Dodge City High School, was certified as both a hunter ed and bowhunter ed instructor in 2014.

“Once certified, Dave worked with his local school board and administration to add both hunter and bowhunter education into his school’s curriculum,” Barrett said. “He has helped change the climate in a school with almost 1,800 students with a large minority enrollment. He invites all students to participate in the Kansas Hunter Education in Our Schools Program and provides all students graduating from hunter ed a chance to attend an after-school graduation wingshooting event.”

Foster said he wanted to reverse the increasing trend of youths not enjoying the outdoors. “As an avid outdoorsman and teacher, I decided that I wanted to offer true lifetime activities in our physical education classes,” he said. “For years I had shared hunting and fishing stories with my students and athletes, and I noticed our youth were becoming more and more detached from nature, especially involvement in hunting and fishing. I also felt that learning to safely handle firearms was an important component for even non-hunters, and felt like this alone could save lives by educating kids about safe gun handling.”

Foster has organized first-deer and first-pheasant hunts for students as well as hunts for new women hunters and has organized hunts for handicapped hunters, Barrett said. He was elected president of Ford County Sportsman’s Club in 2016 “and through his efforts has resurrected that organization from an almost dead state to a level of activity that provides much-needed financial support for the many outdoor activities in the county,” Barrett said. Foster said the organization is now geared “toward truly impacting the youth of Ford County. We have raised more than $90,000 in the last three years that provides opportunities in hunting, fishing, and college scholarships. Our funds provide support for hunter education class, first-pheasant hunts, first-deer hunts, fishing clinics and derbies, and more than $10,000 each year toward scholarships. And we are 100% volunteers with no paid positions.”

Foster said he hopes to instill lifelong skills and habits in his students. “It is important to me to truly make an educational impact on my students,” he said. “As they graduate high school, I want to provide them with knowledge and experiences they can use for the remainder of their lives. I don’t want any aspect of my teaching to be a part of a temporary process.

“Hunter education is important because it is the initial educational opportunity to open up the outdoors to many people,” he said. “It is the first opportunity we have to engage young minds into the realm of the outdoors in terms of hunting. Learning how to safely and ethically hunt and teaching the ‘whys’ is providing an experience that cannot be replaced. I believe teaching the class in a hands-on approach allows students to learn lessons that will stick with them for a lifetime. As instructors, we have the most significant opportunity to teach these students the safety aspect of hunting. Once they graduate from our class, most students will never study these techniques again. I take my role very seriously in terms of understanding the responsibility that has been placed on my shoulders.

“I hope to create a generation of young outdoorsmen and outdoorswomen who truly appreciate the outdoors and have safe experiences while afield,” he said. “I want to provide students with opportunities regardless of the situation they grow up in.”

Foster also wrote grant applications that raised more than $120,000 toward development of Demon Lake, a catch-and-release fishing pond open to the public. Every PE student also learns fishing basics at the lake.

Foster said more than 600 students take PE classes each semester and “we provide every one of them opportunities I only dreamt my high school experience would have offered. We have an administration and board of education that keeps kids as their priority. What we do can’t be done in every school district because not every school district has the courage to open their school doors to safe firearm handling. People lose focus of providing and educating students in the safe way of doing things simply because firearms are scary to people who don’t understand them.”
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Rob Friggeri became a hunter education instructor in 1977, shortly after accepting a Kansas Fish and Game Commission district fisheries biologist position in Pittsburg.

Friggeri, who retired in March, “leads by example and strongly encourages instructors he teaches with to continue to improve their skills and become better instructors,” said Kent Barrett, Kansas Hunter Education Program Coordinator.

“It’s a difficult thing to maintain enthusiasm and effort over a 40-year career, but Rob continues to excel,” Barrett said in nominating Friggeri for the award. “Rob has had a tremendous impact on the young hunters of southeast Kansas over the years. He has managed to give back to the community many times over the great values he learned as a kid.”

Friggeri said his upbringing ignited a lifelong passion for the outdoors. “I was fortunate to have had a father who enjoyed hunting,” he said. “He and his friends took me along to hunt rabbits, doves, quail, and pheasants long before I was able to handle a gun. As a kid growing up in southeast Kansas in the 1960s, it was easy to get hooked on hunting. The quail hunting was some of the best in the country. My love for hunting has continued to grow, and now includes hunting for ducks, geese, moose, caribou, elk, and antelope.”

Friggeri said it started when a core group of hunter ed instructors who held classes in Pittsburg asked him to teach the wildlife management section of the class. Friggeri, with a degree in wildlife biology, felt comfortable with the subject and agreed. “This was a chance to educate students about wildlife and habitat management,” he said. “A few years later, the area coordinator retired and I began organizing the classes as well as teaching.”

“I became a certified instructor because after teaching several classes, I realized I enjoyed introducing young people and newcomers into the sport. But more importantly, I wanted to assist and encourage more people to get out and enjoy hunting. Many of my fondest memories are with family and friends hunting. I wanted others to experience some of those pleasures.”

In 1990, Friggeri added a field day to his hunter ed classes, which was “back in the formative years when adding field day activities was still considered something unique,” Barrett said.

“Prior to that it was all classroom,” Friggeri said. “Our instructors felt strongly that gun handling and shooting be an integral part of our classes. On Saturday, prior to taking the test, students rotate to shoot a shotgun, .22 rifle, and bow. And a field walk is conducted to teach gun handling and how to safely cross a fence or other obstacles. At the last station, we teach boating safety while hunting.”

Barrett said Friggeri has impacted more than 3,800 students over his 41 years as a hunter ed instructor. “His knowledge and ability to hold students’ attention is unmatched,” Barrett said. “He is very professional in how he conducts his hunter ed classes. Rob has a passion for working with kids and adults new to outdoor activities. His casual, respectful personality and obvious wealth of knowledge and enthusiasm for the outdoors make him exceptionally approachable, especially for younger students who may be a little shy or uncertain.”

Hunter education, Friggeri said, “is important to me because it is a good way to give back, to promote and protect the sport of hunting that I love so much.

“I want students to leave our hunter education class with a solid understanding of safety rules and have the ability to handle a gun or bow safely,” he said. “But beyond that, I want each student to have fun and feel confident that they can shoot a shotgun, rifle, or bow. It is my hope that they will be anxious to try it again with friends and family.”

Friggeri was one of the first instructors to read the test for students with learning disabilities, Barrett said, and has been a volunteer mentor for numerous youth deer hunts, has guided for youth hunts, and instructed new hunters how to field dress an animal and preserve the meat. He is also an active member of Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, Ducks Unlimited, and Quail Forever, Barrett said, and has been active with many youth groups, particularly the Girls Scouts. So much so, his work to improve area lakes and ponds has been recognized by the Girl Scouts who placed a sign at their local pond dedicating it as “Rob’s Pond.”
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Future Leader in Conservation Scholarship Winners: Gorecki and Somerfeld

Gallery of Guns Student Scholarship Winners Both From Montana

In their continued quest to support hunter education, Gallery of Guns each year recognizes two outstanding hunter education students who rise to the top in the Gallery of Guns Future Leader in Conservation Scholastic Scholarship search.

Students submit essays, a biography, hunter education certificate, and other materials which are reviewed by the Instructor Advisory Committee. Each winner receives a $2,500 scholarship from Gallery of Guns.

Winners this year are Tyler Gorecki and Javier Somerfeld, who live about three hours apart in Montana.

“We are pleased to present these scholarships to Javier and Tyler, who represent the thousands of safe and ethical hunters developed each year by hunter education classes,” said Bill Bennett, director of marketing for Davidson’s and GalleryofGuns.com. “We support the Future Leaders of Conservation Scholastic Scholarship because these students, these hunters, are the future of hunting and we know with students like Javier and Tyler, our hunting heritage is in good hands.”

Tyler Gorecki
Harlowton, Montana

Tyler Gorecki, who became involved in hunting at about age seven when he accompanied his father, Richard, on hunting trips, plans to pursue a degree in wildlife biology and a career with Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks.

“I accompanied my dad on hunting trips as often as I possibly could,” Gorecki said, “and was always looking to help, even if it meant getting my hands dirty while field dressing simply because I love the emotional atmosphere that surrounds the experience of a hunt as well as the camaraderie shared between friends and family.”

Gorecki, 18, graduated from Harlowton High School where he played varsity football and basketball and was selected as an all-conference...
defensive end and earned academic all-state honors. He also participated in baseball, swimming, wrestling, and track and field. In addition, he raises and shows cattle and hogs. This fall he plans to attend Helena College to earn an associate degree, then pursue a bachelor’s degree at Montana State or the University of Montana.

“Hunting is a major factor in my future as I plan to focus my work around maintaining and preserving wildlife as well as the ecosystems at which they preside,” he said. “Hunting will always remain one of my favorite pastimes.”

Gorecki said he hunts as often as possible, but usually it boils down to a couple weeks in the fall and a week in the spring. His favorite, he said, is high-country spot-and-stalk mule deer hunting. In fact, he said his favorite hunting experience so far was “a ten-hour pursuit of a monster muley buck that I was fortunate enough to harvest. He scored a total of 218 inches.”

“While pursuing this buck, I found myself referring back to my hunter’s education to make wise and ethical decisions,” Gorecki wrote in the essay he submitted with his scholarship application. “When I finally crossed paths with this majestic animal, he was surrounded by several of his does. Instead of trying to throw a bullet through small openings and potentially injuring or killing another animal, I decided to wait until I had a clean line of fire. While waiting for an open shot, I had time to observe the surrounding terrain to confidently conclude that the animal was not skylined and had a barren hill behind him to provide a solid backdrop. After another minute of waiting, the buck walked out to a clear opening away from all the other animals around him. I confidently placed my crosshairs behind his shoulder, took three calm breaths, and slowly squeezed the trigger.”

Gorecki said he has always enjoyed an active outdoor lifestyle “partaking in many activities such as hunting, shooting, sports, and livestock showmanship,” he said. “Hunting has been a passion of mine for as long as I can remember. Before I was able to involve myself in hunter education, I would always like to help’ my dad hunting; whether that was stalking an animal, field dressing, tracking, or hanging meat. I was all for it.”

Acknowledging those who have helped him succeed along the way, Gorecki thanks his parents, grandparents, and friends for making it all possible, or as he states it, “I would like to thank my parents for putting up with me for all 18 years and always supporting whatever adventure I dream up,” he said. “I would like to thank my grandparents Mitch and Barb Henderson for the constant support, and finally Kevin Gauthier and Rick Naylor for being the best hunting partners a guy could ask for!”

Javier Somerfeld
Power, Montana

Javier Somerfeld completed hunter education in 2011 and became a hunter education instructor in 2014.

Though only 18 himself, he talks about influencing the even younger generation. “I became an instructor because it’s the way to teach the younger generation about hunting, making sure hunting is done the proper way, and at the same time teaching the younger kids how to be safe while hunting,” he said. And though no one pushed him to become an instructor, there’s some family history there, plus he saw a need on the horizon, the need to ensure hunter education is available for future generations.

“My uncle and grandpa are instructors, and I took it upon myself to become an instructor,” he said. “Being from a small town of 180 people, once my grandpa and uncle stop instructing, there will be no one else to do it. That’s another reason I became an instructor, so that there will always be someone who can teach it.”

Somerfeld said he enjoys working with—and learning from—kids in his classes. “I learn how to work with different personalities the kids have,” he said. “And sometimes the kids can tell some interesting stories.”

He said he wants to teach his students how to be safe and ethical hunters and, while doing so, “hopefully keeping the hunting tradition alive.”

Somerfeld, a graduate of Power High School, will be a freshman at Presentation College in Aberdeen, S.D., majoring in athletic training while also playing football. He has a long list of football awards, including offensive MVP in 2016-17; all-conference honors in back-to-back seasons; all-state in his senior year and playing in the six-man all-star game and the CAN-AM (Canada vs USA) game.

Somerfeld is the sixth generation to live on his family’s farm and ranch, four of which still live there today. “We are conservationists and avid sportsmen,” he wrote in his essay accompanying his scholarship application. “There is a balance between people in agriculture and hunting. We have deer, antelope, and we are in a natural migratory path for elk and moose to come through. We have pheasants, Hungarian partridges, sharptail grouse, sage grouse, and a variety and ducks and geese that feed and nest on our property. We have coyotes, fox, and we see wolves, mountain lions, and lynx once in a while.”

“We maintain habitat for all native wildlife,” he said. “We always leave enough residue from our wheat and barley crop for cover. We raise small grains, hay, and native pasture, waterways with buffers, and we have streams and ponds that keep our livestock watered as well as the wildlife.”

Somerfeld likes deer and elk hunting, as well as trout fishing.

“Because I was raised on a farm and ranch hunting has always been part of my life, I grew up with hunting all around,” he said. “You could say it is part of my culture and the family culture.”

Hunting is important to him because “it is a way to get away from the world for a little bit and being able to have fun and relax,” he said. “It also brings your family and friends closer and being able to make memories.”

Somerfeld is active in his church and community and belongs to the Challenging Champs 4-H Club, Sons of the American Legion, and, being a referee, the Montana Officials Association.

He thanks his parents and grandparents for contributing to his success, or as he puts it, “for pushing me to do the best I can no matter what I am doing.”
With hunting season right around the corner, I was out the other day working on my deer stands. I had climbed into one of my tripod stands that overlooks a powerline that comes off of Hartwell Dam which is located on the South Carolina/Georgia state line. As I sat there taking it easy for a minute enjoying the view, everything was right with the world. It wouldn’t be when I climbed back down because I had missed the yellow-jacket nest on the climb up. They would find me on the way down, but that’s another story.

Back to my “all is right with the world” moment. When hunting out of this stand, you have to have some restraint. You can see to shoot for approximately 275 yards toward the Georgia line. The problem is that if you shoot past 215 yards, you will be shooting over the crest of a hill and if you miss your target or the bullet passes through, the bullet will continue to travel towards the Savannah River and Highway 29. If that happens, there is a real possibility that your bullet could hit someone well over a mile away. For this reason, when I hunt this stand or if someone else hunts this stand, I instruct them to not shoot at anything past the big red clay spot located in the middle of the power line, on the hillside 215 yards away. This clay spot is well below the crest of the hill and any bullet fired between the stand and this spot will go safely into the hillside. I have seen quite a few bucks past the 215-yard mark while hunting out of this stand. All I can do is look at them through binoculars and be thankful I had the opportunity to see such magnificent animals on my property. I am truly blessed!

During my 31-year career as Game Warden, I investigated many Hunting Related Shooting Incidents (HRSI). Some of the most devastating ones happened when a victim was mistaken for game. This is when a hunter takes aim at another person which he or she has mistaken for a game animal. The consequences can be, and usually are, catastrophic. One of the most tragic ones I worked was a hog hunting HRSI that involved a father and his 12-year-old son. They were hunting in the Ocmulgee River Swamp late one afternoon. The father had taken his son down a dried up slough and placed him in a 10-foot metal ladder stand. He then went back out the slough, met up with his brother and they both climbed into their stands. As the sun began to set and darkness began to creep into the swamp, the hogs began to move. Squealing could be heard all through the swamp. The brother shot and killed a hog and the father helped him drag it back to the road. The son had heard the shot and had also seen several hogs but could not get a shot.

There was very little light left in the swamp and the father decided it was time to go get his son out of the stand. The father walked down the slough toward the stand. When he was approximately 23 yards from the ladder stand,
he would have seen his son stand up because he was silhouetted against the skyline. He thought that his son had seen him and was getting down so he never spoke or called out to him. Unfortunately, he was partially right, his son had seen something, but he thought his father was a hog. The son had stood up to take aim. The .223 caliber bullet struck his father just above his belly button. The father would later die while being transported to a medical facility. Every time we wonder: how can something like this happen?

Many years ago, when I was a baby Game Warden, a young man stepped out onto a public road to wait for someone to pick him up. He had been deer hunting and decided to make his way back to the dirt road to wait for his ride. All of a sudden, down the road over 100 yards away, a deer stepped out into the road and stopped. Not thinking about what might happen, just the excitement of seeing a deer, the young man shouldered his 7mm magnum caliber rifle, took aim and fired. The deer ran into the woods and the young man immediately went to look for the deer. He went to the spot where the thought the deer was crossing the road and looked for blood. After searching the area he found no blood. He then thought maybe the deer was further than he had thought so he walked further down the road looking for any sign that he had hit the deer. Eventually, another 100 yards down the road he found another hunter lying in the road ditch, dead. When he shot at the deer, he missed and the 7mm magnum had traveled beyond his target and hit another hunter standing on the edge of the road. The young man never knew he was there until he had found him dead.

There are several lessons to be learned from both of these incidents. **First and foremost: Always be sure of your target before you pull the trigger.** Know the identifying features of your target animal. Never use your scope as a set of binoculars because what you are trying to scope just might turn out to be a human. **Secondly, you must also know what is in front of as well as beyond your target.** Say to yourself, “Where will my bullet go if I fire this shot?” Never get so excited that you cannot make a good sound decision on whether to shoot or not to shoot. Always take a deep breath and calm down before the shot. Not only will this make you a better marksman, but will give you a chance to assess the situation before you take the shot. **Remember—once you pull that trigger you can never call that shot back.**

In the first paragraph I talked about hunting out of a stand that, after a certain distance, no longer had a safe backstop. That’s just common sense hunting and always putting safety first. Yes, I get excited and yes, I see shooter bucks sometimes that are past my safety zone. Just keep in mind that no animal, no matter how big a trophy, is worth the possibility of taking a human life. I’m not saying don’t get excited while hunting because when I cease to get excited it will be time to quit. Just remember to calm down, make good hunting decisions, and remember: hunting is not all about bagging an animal, it’s about being there and enjoying all aspects of the hunt.

Mike Van Durme is a retired Environmental Conservation Police Captain from New York State and has been a Hunter Education Instructor for 35 years. He is a co-author of “Blood On The Leaves, Real Hunting Accident Investigations and Lessons in Hunter Safety.” He and co-author Sgt. Keith Byers, who retired from Georgia DNR, operate Hunting and Shooting Related Consultants, LLC and are regular contributors to the Journal.

**Just keep in mind that no animal, no matter how big a trophy, is worth the possibility of taking a human life.**
It Happened to Me—Lost in the Woods

By Dr. Anne Marie Radke

One of the ways we teach our annual Hunter Safety class is through the telling and retelling of anecdotes and real-life experiences. My favorite teachable story involves my husband, David, and the night we got lost in the woods. We live on 15 acres of property on the edge of Charlotte, NC and Dave has two deer stands on the property. He uses all safety precautions involved with the stands, including safety harness and proper climbing and firearms handling going into and out of the stand. He also packs a walkie-talkie to call back to the house in the event of an emergency. Knowing what a safe hunter he is, I was surprised to get a call one evening. He was hunting at dusk—looking for a six-pointer in the woods, flashlights in hand, baby monitor in the other.

“Honey?” he whispered through the walkie-talkie.

“Yes?” I whispered back. Our daughter was 18 months old, and already in bed for the night.

“Um—I need help,” he admitted.

“How are we going to get out of this one?” said David, shaking his head.

“Anyone have a cell phone?” asked Dave hopefully. No one did.

At this point, I was starting to panic. I was already a horrible mother for leaving the baby and going on this wild deer chase, now I was lost in the woods. “I’ve seen this movie,” I said. “And the chick always gets killed first.”

Reed’s eyes almost bulged out of his head. “Don’t be sayin’ that now,” he muttered, looking around nervously. Don’t be sayin’ that.”

I laughed.

“How are we going to get out of this one?” I said, and turning to Merlin, hissed “Merlin! You bad dog! Go home!” Merlin stared at me—stunned and disbelieving, so I repeated myself.

“Go home!”

Ears drooping, tail tucked, the big blue merle collie slunk away from us in an agony of mortification of his bad dog-ness. We followed cautiously, our fear slowly evolving into jubilation as we came out into our pasture and saw the lights of home shining before us.

Poor Merlin, confused even more now that we were slapping his ribs and declaring him a Good Boy, gave up on us entirely and went to hide in his dog house. Dave and Reed got the deer up on the truck, and Reed headed home. The baby was still asleep and all was well with the world, as well as a valuable lesson learned: know where you are at all times, and always have ways to get out safely and effectively.

David was tragically killed in a small plane crash in 2010 returning from a family hunt in the Dakotas. He loved to teach Hunter Safety and wilderness lore and he lives on in this example, which I share with our classes, as to why a map, pen light, cell phone, or GPS should always be in your hunter’s bag of tricks.
# 2018 Hunter’s Handbook Prize Winners Announced

The only way students or instructors can enter to win prizes is to fill out the form in *Hunter’s Handbook* or visit us online at www.huntershandbook.com. The 27th annual edition of the *Hunter’s Handbook* was recently shipped to all state and provincial warehouses for distribution in classes. If you have not received your copies, be sure to contact your state/provincial administrator for free copies for your students. Then, make sure you and your students register for next year’s drawing! See pages 44-45 of *Hunter’s Handbook* for details. Students, their instructor, and their state/provincial administrator all won secondary prizes for entering in the hunt. These entries were among thousands *Hunter’s Handbook* receives annually via its entry forms.

## 2018 Hunter’s Handbook Prize Winners

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STATE</th>
<th>STUDENT WINNER/PRIZE</th>
<th>INSTRUCTOR/PRIZE</th>
<th>ADMINISTRATOR/PRIZE</th>
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<td>MacKenzie Lam</td>
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<td>Zara Allen</td>
<td>Dean Blanck</td>
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<td>Bushnell Excursion HD 8x42mm binoculars</td>
<td>Leupold VX-2 3-9x40mmm CDS Matte Duplex Scope</td>
<td>Bushnell Trophy 2.5-145x50mm DOA LR600i Riflescope</td>
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<td>Austin McGill</td>
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<td>ME</td>
<td>Donovan Bell</td>
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<td>HIVIZ S-Series magnetic front shotgun sight; Streamlight stylus flashlight</td>
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<td>Otis Wingshooter cleaning system</td>
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<td>OR</td>
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<td>Winchester Shotgun case; stainless steel travel mug; black cap</td>
<td>Winchester Rifle case; stainless steel travel mug; gray cap</td>
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<td>Michele Aldrich</td>
<td>Tristanna Bickford</td>
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Muzlstik, a new visual safety indicator, adds a valuable tool in firearm safety, the No. 1 consideration of firearm handling. For use at home, at the range, in the classroom, in the field, or anywhere firearms are handled, Muzlstik provides a highly visible reminder that a firearm is loaded or unloaded.

The original Muzlstik, a T-shaped device that fits in the muzzle of a barrel, evolved into a clip-over-the-side model, great for use in gun safes, and the new chamber flag design, which blocks open firearm actions to prevent accidental firing while indicating whether the firearm is loaded or not.

Made of durable ABS plastic, Muzlstiks are great for demonstrating firearm safety to hunter education students while also being put to practical use by actually indicating whether the firearms in the classroom are unloaded and safe. They have also proven to be a hit with range safety officers who appreciate the highly visible nature of these simple and effective devices.

Don’t think Muzlstiks are just for muzzleloading firearms. Yes, they work great in muzzleloaders, but they are also for every firearm in your home—rifles, shotguns, handguns—whether they are stored in a gun safe, gun cabinet, or bedside table. One of the Muzlstik styles will provide a fast, visible, reassuring reminder of the status of each of your firearms during storage, transportation, or at the field or range.

Muzlstik’s simple, effective, and easy-to-use design is patented and comes in a choice of colors. And, they’re made in the U.S.A.

Enjoy Hunter Education instructor discounts when you order Muzlestik for your classroom. Just sign into the secure section of the IHEA-USA website to get their shopping cart passcode, and link through to their site to order today.

For more information, visit online at muzlstik.com
THE OUTDOOR CLASSROOM
STARTS INDOORS

Hunters learn something every time they go afield, yet their foundation as safety-conscious, ethical hunters likely begins in your classroom. The knowledge they gain from dedicated volunteer hunter education instructors like you sticks with them for a lifetime and also helps them mentor new hunters.

Through its printed and digital materials, the National Shooting Sports Foundation has been assisting volunteer instructors with teaching students about firearms safety, ethical hunting and conservation for decades. We can help with your mission.

Visit NSSF.org to order materials today.