It Could Never Happen to Me, Never in a Million Years

Lessons Learned, After the Shot

How Matters, Hunting Ethics and Fair Chase
Features

10 It Could Never Happen to Me
By Doug Moore

14 Never in a Million Years
By Erik Burney

Departments

4 President’s Corner:
Modernizing the Pittman-Robertson Fund for Tomorrow’s Needs Act
By Megan Wisecup, President IHEA-USA

6 USFWS Update:
A New Hunter Education Program in Ohio
By Jordan Phillips and Chelsea Herrick

20 Lessons Learned, After the Shot
By Sgt. Keith Byers, GA DNR, retired

36 NSSF Notes: NSSF Has Resources for Hunters
By Jennifer L.S. Pearsall, NSSF Director, Public Relations
Hunting is an important wildlife management tool that maintains the health and abundance of game species and the balance of our natural resources. Hunters play an important role in managing wildlife and it is their excise tax dollars paid through the Pittman-Robertson Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act of 1937 (PR Funds) and hunting licenses and fees that pay for the majority of wildlife management.

PR Funds create a direct link between those that hunt and participate in the shooting sports and the resources needed to expand and enhance opportunities to hunt and shoot. Known as the North American model of wildlife conservation, this user pays public benefit model is extremely successful because sportsmen and women and the industries that serve them have always been willing to pay extra to enhance, expand and protect America’s hunting, shooting and conservation heritage.

As hunters, shooters and volunteer instructors who work closely with programs funded through these dollars, it is imperative that we understand the need to update the provisions of the Pittman-Robertson Act.

**Present Law**

The Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration Act of 1937 uses the proceeds from a federal excise tax to fund grants to state and territorial fish and wildlife agencies for projects to benefit wildlife resources and to conduct programs for hunter education. The excise tax is set at 10% of the wholesale price for pistols and revolvers, and 11% for other firearms, as well as shells or cartridges. An 11% tax on archery equipment (broadheads, bows and equipment that attaches to bows) and $0.49 per arrow shaft is also deposited into the fund. Total collections from these taxes were approximately $814 million in FY2013 and $825 million in FY2014. All of the revenues from these excise taxes go into a special account called the Wildlife Restoration Fund administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) in the Department of the Interior. Grants from the Wildlife Restoration Fund may be used for: restoration, conservation, management and enhancement of wildlife and their habitat; providing public use and access to wildlife resources; and providing for education of hunters and development of shooting ranges.

**Reasons for Change**

The increasing urbanization and suburbanization of our population has made it more difficult for the public to participate in hunting and recreational shooting. As the base of hunters and recreational shooters narrows, the PR Wildlife Conservation funds likewise decline. Without increasing user fees, taxes, or imposing a new federal mandate, this legislation will preserve the current user-pay funding of wildlife conservation for generations to come. The future of the sportsmen and women activities we all enjoy today requires bringing more people into our community.

The Modernizing the Pittman-Robertson Fund for Tomorrow’s Needs Act will:

- Clarify that a purpose of the Pittman-Robertson Act is to extend financial and technical assistance to the states for the promotion of hunting and recreational shooting;
- Clarify, by removing an existing prohibition on “public relations,” that state spending for management of wildlife areas and resources may include spending for the promotion of hunting and recreational shooting;
- Clarify that the construction, operation, and maintenance of public target ranges under the Basic Hunter
Education funding is not restricted to ranges that include hunter safety programs; and

**Expand the Multistate** Conservation Grant program by allocating $5 million per year (from current archery tax collections) for hunter and recreational shooter recruitment project grants that promote a national hunting and shooting sport recruitment program and related communication and outreach activities.

**Ensure that traditional** wildlife conservation remains the primary focus of these funds, the legislation would put a cap (25%) on the amount of Section 4(b) funds that can be spent on hunter and recreational shooter recruitment over a five year period.

**Expand the definitions** section of the Pittman-Robertson Act to include a definition of “hunter recruitment and recreational shooter recruitment” activities and projects and make clear that Pittman-Robertson act funds under sections 4(b), 4(c), and 10 may be used for hunter recruitment and recreational shooter recruitment.

The Modernizing the Pittman-Robertson Fund for Tomorrow’s Needs Act is currently supported by 35 national sportsmen and women’s conservation organizations. To continue to monitor movement on this legislation, visit: www.congress.gov/ and search for Senate Bill 2690 (S 2690) and House of Representatives Bill 4818 (HR 4818).
Ohio is looking at innovative ways to create and keep new hunters. Studies have shown that people who don’t have anyone to teach them to hunt or shoot, or who didn’t grow up in a hunting family, have a difficult time getting started in the sport. Knowing this, the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) Division of Wildlife is crafting new approaches at creating lifelong hunters through a pilot program called Learn to Hunt.

How it Came About

The idea of creating a new hunter program, which focuses on multiple interactions with participants over an extended period of time, emerged from the hunter adoption model. This model categorizes hunters and potential hunters into three broad categories: recruitment, retention, and reactivation. For example, people in the recruitment phase are aware or interested in hunting but don’t currently hunt. The lapsed hunter is aware of hunting because he or she used to hunt and is listed in the reactivation phase. Conservation agencies ideally want hunters in the retention phase because they participate every year.

A successful hunting introductory program needs to transition away from traditional one-time interactions to a mentored approach with multiple interactions. In order to learn a skill, such as hunting, and to feel confident enough to use those skills independently, potential hunters need mentors and a social support network. This new program targets people who had an interest in hunting and shooting but lacked the experience or opportunity. A target group was identified and a schedule of events was set for the Learn to Hunt program.

And So it Began

The kick-off to this new hunter program started at a public library in Columbus, Ohio. The library regularly features a series of how-to programs for adults, so a two-hour program on hunting in Ohio was offered. Non-hunting adults gathered one evening, with an interest in learning more about hunting. At the conclusion of the program, the attendees were surveyed to see if they had an interest in participating in a pilot Learn to Hunt program. Their reaction served as a great start to the program, and everyone in attendance wanted to participate.

Over the next several months, these soon-to-be hunters went through a variety of hands-on training sessions, including shooting, hunter education, game care, gun cleaning, cooking game, and at the conclusion, their first hunting experience. The training sessions for shooting took place over several weekends at a local conservation club. Most of the participants had never held a firearm before, let alone fired one. The club members graciously welcomed the group, and many of the club’s members assisted the new shooters in the learning process. In an unforeseen benefit to the club, many of the participants began attending the club’s public shoots outside of class to improve their skills.

Interaction and active participation are essential to get a first-time hunter hooked. To introduce this group to hunt-
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ing, the participants traveled to a pheasant preserve. The day was filled with plenty of action for the new hunters with multiple bird flushes, dogs working the fields, safe shots, and great conversation during and after the hunt. Many participants commented how comfortable they felt with a shotgun after being taught the correct handling and shooting techniques.

The Learn to Hunt pilot program was deemed a short-term success. Participants showed an interest in hunting and had purchased hunting licenses. Since then, several participants have even invested in their own hunting equipment and firearms. Over the long term, the ODNR Division of Wildlife will continue to monitor to see if participants continue to acquire hunting licenses.

**Next Steps**

A mentored hunting program requires extensive teamwork and preparation to realize the goal of recruiting more hunters to Ohio. Conservation clubs and other partners host many excellent events to teach or introduce different aspects of hunting. By combining and coordinating these separate events into several lessons, participants will be able to build on their hunting knowledge one step at a time. Essentially, each conservation club and participating partner will be a link in a fun chain of events to teach ethical, responsible, and knowledgeable hunters. Tweaking the current shooting and hunting programs that clubs currently host creates a complete mentored hunting program without increasing the workload on any particular group.

For more information about the Learn to Hunt Program, please contact Eric A. Postell, Outdoor Education Supervisor, Ohio Division of Wildlife. Email him at Eric.Postell@dnr.state.oh.us.

**About the Authors:**

Jordan Phillips grew up in Michigan spending most of his time hunting and fishing. Jordan attended Hocking College where he obtained his Associate’s Degree in Wildlife Sciences. After graduating, he was hired by the Ohio Division of Wildlife. Jordan works at the Division of Wildlife District One office located in Columbus, Ohio as an Outdoor Skills Specialist. Jordan spends any and all of his free time hunting, fishing and enjoying time with his wife, Morgan and daughter Madelyn.

Chelsea Herrick is the Outdoor Skills Specialist for the Ohio Division of Wildlife, serving 19 counties in Southeast Ohio. Chelsea is responsible for the hunter, trapper, fishing, archery and shooting sports education in her district, as well as training new instructors to help carry on these traditions to future generations. Coming from a hunting- and fishing-oriented family, she has spent her whole life connected to the outdoors. She attended Ohio University where she received her Bachelor’s in Communications.
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Those that know me know that I have spent a lifetime around firearms, over forty years of experience. I’ve hunted that entire time, I’ve taken multiple self-defense firearms classes, I’ve dedicated years to raising money for the Friends of NRA, and finally, I have been a hunter education and bowhunter education instructor for the State of Alaska for the last five years. Up until this point, I have had exactly one negligent discharge with a handgun at age 16. Because I only violated one of the four rules of firearm safety, the only victim in that case was the floor. Other than that, and this recent incident, I have fired tens of thousands of rounds without a problem. I only mention this to put context on my level of experience, not as an excuse, just for people to realize that we can never be too careful.

My friend Erik and I had booked a four day blacktail deer hunt with a well known transporter to hunt on Montague Island in Prince William Sound. This was a boat-based trip where we spent the nights on a converted trawler and then were transported to the beach with a smaller skiff each morning to a location of our choosing. We were picked up right at dark every evening. On the first day we discovered that this hunt was going to be tough. There was about six inches of crusty snow on the ground and it was nearly impossible to move without making a racket.

We spent a great deal of time catching up and visiting. Over the last few years our friendship had become closer and we were both really enjoying our time out in the woods. It was probably not the best hunting strategy, but time in the field isn’t always about hunting. He graciously allowed me to shoot a button buck he spotted on day one, but other than that we had been seeing very few deer. Sign was everywhere, but they could hear us coming from hundreds of yards away. I won’t speak for Erik, but I was getting pretty frustrated.

On day four I changed a couple things in my routine. Two comments were made the night before that caused me to change my patterns. First, were comments made by the boat crew that there was no reason to carry the VHF radio I had along for emergencies because they’d only hear it from the beach. Second, were comments that you really didn’t need binoculars for the short distances deer were seen at. Being tired of carrying the extra weight, I left the binoculars behind and left the VHF radio on the beach. Along with the VHF radio I left my arctic clothing that I carried in a dry bag for emergency purposes.

After sorting our gear out on the beach, we had a brief talk and decided that we would keep our talking to a minimum and walk very slowly for that day. Neither of us was wearing any type of bright clothing, much less hunter orange. Neither of us discussed any sort of plan if we lost sight of each other.

Within a few hours we had become separated. I’d been steadily working my way up some steep terrain and I believed that Erik was somewhere below me. I’d been following some big buck tracks and they were fresh.
Periodically I’d catch a glimpse of the deer out ahead of me. I never spooked him and continued to follow his tracks. At some point I decided to take a break in the sun. I’d been working hard and was about to quit climbing the mountain I was on. After a power bar and water, I convinced myself that I would regret it forever if I didn’t finish the climb. I gathered my gear and quietly crept into the dark woods. There was very little snow in the deep woods and I usually would pick up the buck’s tracks when I reached an opening. As I entered the woods I heard crunching off to my left. My brain automatically assumed it was Erik because I’d yet to hear a deer making a crunching noise. Dead ahead of me I caught a glimpse of movement.

That glimpse of movement was Erik waving his brown hat to get my attention. I saw it as a deer’s tail waving across the white patch on the rump. His outstretched fingers, encased in brown leather gloves looked like antlers. I quietly stepped behind the spruce tree I had just come around and shed my pack. I extended my walking stick that had a shooting saddle on top, mounted my rifle and looked up the hill into the darkness. I had the scope power turned up too far, so I relaxed and lowered it to 3x. I looked back up the hill, located what I thought was a deer’s rump, looked a little right and saw what looked like the antlers of a deer grazing. I could clearly see the top hump of the deer’s shoulder; I lowered half way down, settled my breath and fired the shot.

In an instant both of our lives changed forever. Immediately after the recoil I couldn’t see anything in my scope anymore and for a moment I felt that excitement of a shot well fired.

That moment was short lived. Erik cried out that I’d shot him. I looked left, because that’s where I thought he was, and shouted that I’d shot a deer. I honestly thought he was screwing with me until he slid down the slope into a patch of light. I honestly don’t know what happened next, but I do remember removing the round I’d automatically jacked into the chamber after the shot. I put the rifle down and quickly ran up the hill a few steps. At that moment I’m sure Erik and I were communicating, but I don’t recall what was said. I do know that the relief of him talking to me brought me out of the panic. I quickly turned heel, realizing my med kid was in my pack. I grabbed it and headed up hill. In my earlier life as an EMT I’d treated three GSWs and only one had survived.

I cannot describe the relief I felt when I arrived to see a relatively minor wound on Erik’s shoulder. Don’t get me wrong, a 30-06 to the top of the shoulder is a major deal, but it wasn’t as major as I’d seen. I buried my shame and a flood of other emotions and went into medic mode. I carry several appropriate GSW bandages in my kit and an Israeli
compression bandage did the job nicely. Unfortunately, even wounded, Erik is a speedy dude. At one point I lost him and that caused me more panic. Once again we didn’t communicate well enough. It all worked out as he was at the beach digging into my emergency bag for the radio. Luck was on our side and the crew of the boat heard our calls.

Once bandaged, we made a plan to head to the beach. I carried all the gear and Erik made his way on his own. The boat crew was extremely professional and they began communicating with the U.S. Coast Guard for an evacuation. Erik was evacuated to a hospital in Anchorage and was released that night.

I spent the night on the boat waiting for our scheduled departure the next morning. I sat in my small room in the dark trying to reconcile what happened. Even after Erik described his hat and glove waving, I still could not see him in my mind. I still saw a deer and I still see a deer to this day.

I learned some valuable lessons that day. I had been a hypocrite by teaching people in my hunter education classes to wear hunter orange in the field, yet I hadn’t bothered. Nor did I encourage my hunting partner to wear it.

I chose to be lazy and leave the weight of my binoculars behind. I allowed myself to be swayed by others to forget the value of binoculars in the field. Had I been wearing them, I most likely would have been able to identify my target in the dark woods.

I let my pride and competitiveness get in the way of my good judgment. I’ve always been a competitive person. Hunting should not be a competitive endeavor, but it’s pretty tough to watch everyone else harvest deer and not be able to do so yourself. The frustration led me to see what I wanted to see. I was convinced I was seeing a deer and I was convinced I was taking a 100% for-sure shot. My brain would not allow any other thoughts into my analysis.

I have spent the months since this incident trying to educate myself on the tricks the human mind can play when we desire to see something so much that it becomes reality to us; even when the image is completely wrong. I hope to learn more and share that with others in the future.

On November 18th, 2015 I negligently shot one of my best friends and one of the finest human beings I know. I make no excuses. I made an error that I thought would never happen to me, and that’s precisely why it happened to me.
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On November 18th, 2015, my hunting partner and dear friend shot me in a terrible case of mistaken identity. I’m going to share what happened from my perspective, along with our analysis of what we did wrong, emphasis on “we.”

Yes, he shot me, but we both made mistakes, and this incident follows a fairly common pattern with mishaps—it was the result of a series of small errors that individually were not serious enough to raise any red flags and alter our decision-making.

We were on the last day of a four day hunt and we’d seen few deer and shot only one—a button buck. Over the previous three days we spent too much time walking and talking together. With the deer rut in full swing we had expected the hunting to be far easier, so for this last day we decided to separate more and move slower. We were feeling
pressure to put some meat on the ground. On this morning the sun came into view at 10:22am. I know because I stopped to take a picture as the sun crested the jagged horizon formed by a mountain range that runs along Montague’s north-south spine. The day was beautiful—clear, calm, and about 25 degrees.

After snapping a few pictures I looked to see my partner 150 yards away to the east of me crossing an open park on a northbound line to the south face of a steep, flat-topped hill covered in mature timber. I was at the western edge of the same park and began climbing northwest towards an open saddle about 400 yards away. After glassing from the saddle, I turned east towards the top of the hill. I was heading up the east face of the hill as my partner headed up the south face. As I began my climb we’d been out of sight of each other for ten minutes or so. When I got to the top I veered left and followed a narrow deer trail along the north rim of the hill. When I’d worked my way about halfway up, I turned south. The timber was heavy enough that there was little to no snow on the hilltop, just frozen sphagnum moss covering everything and it took only a couple of minutes to pick my way across.

Standing on the south rim facing the sun I was struck by how pretty the scene was. I dropped off the crest and descended a few yards to get a better angle for taking pictures. After snapping a couple photos I was interrupted by the sound of movement off to my right at my level. I slipped my phone in my pocket and brought my binos up
trying to make out some part of a deer. I looked and looked but saw nothing so I moved downhill a bit more to get a better angle. Still nothing.

Then, about a minute later I again heard movement off to my right but this time well downhill and again I scanned with my binos. This time I found the face of my partner looking up at me through a lane in the brush. He was about 60 yards west of me and another 30 yards downslope. Seeing him I relaxed and had the thought I’d make my way down to him and we’d have lunch, but first I tried getting his attention. I did not consider yelling out because I didn’t want to spook any deer that might be playing cat and mouse with us on this hill so I waved at him and could see his facial expression well enough to tell that he wasn’t recognizing me. Then I pulled my hat off so he could see my full face and waved some more. My rifle sling began to slip off my shoulder and I stopped to adjust it. As I turned and waved at him again, it happened.

What I’m about to describe happened in a fraction of a second but it seemed like slow motion—this effect is known as Temporal Distortion and it happens because your brain records what your eyes see much faster than your consciousness can process it. I saw the muzzle flash followed by the air rippling from sonic waves in front of the bullet. I felt the “fwizzz” of the bullet passing over my left thumb just as it hit me with a sharp, heavy smack. Lastly, I heard the boom of the shot. I was essentially looking down the barrel when the trigger was pulled and saw it all because I was relaxed and not anticipating it. I watched my friend shoot me and never saw him shoulder his rifle or prepare to shoot. It never entered my mind that I could be confused with a deer. Never in a million years did I
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It was an emotional moment for us both. Here we were, a couple of manly men, both with lots of experience in the Alaskan backcountry, suddenly dealing with a situation neither of us ever believed could happen to us.

ever think something like this would ever happen to me, I was a conscien-
tious hunter and part of that was being choosy about who I hunted with.
I somehow stayed on my feet and in a voice that was half yell, half terrified shriek cried out “Oh ****, ______ you just shot me!” Without hesitation my partner yelled back, “No I didn’t! I just shot a deer!”

THIS IS IMPORTANT. Even as I cried out that he shot me, my partner was convinced he’d been shooting at a deer. For a second he thought I was playing with him.
I yelled back, “NO YOU DIDN’T!! YOU SHOT ME!!” I slumped back against the steep hillside and into a patch of full sunlight. It was then that he finally saw me for m e. He reacted immediately and raced up to me with his medical kit. Fortunately, he had once been an EMT and had treated gunshot wounds before. He had a gunshot dressing in his pack and within five or six minutes of being shot my wound was dressed and the bleeding controlled. From this point I had to walk about a mile back to the beach and our emergency duffel stashed in the brush near where we were dropped off. I dug the marine radio out of the duffel, hailed the boat, and set in motion my eventual helicopter ride to the emergency room.

It was an emotional moment for us both. Here we were, a couple of manly men, both with lots of experience in the Alaskan backcountry, suddenly dealing with a situation neither of us ever believed could happen to us. But it did, and here’s why:

#1. Hunter Orange
I wasn’t wearing anything bright. My green and brow n clothing contributed to the optical illusion that turned me into a deer. Hunter orange is not required in Alaska but it’s a good idea, especially in the dark woods. If I’d been wearing hunter orange I probably wouldn’t have been shot.

#2. Communication
At the moment he pulled the trigger my partner thought I was 400-500 yards off to his left. If we’d’ve met to discuss our intended plans prior to leaving each other’s sight my partner would have known I was on the hill above him and I probably wouldn’t have been shot.

#3. Binoculars
Long considered an essential piece of gear, binoculars allow you to distinguish what’s actually there from what you think is there. How many times have you seen an animal in the distance only to have your binos reveal a stump, or a bush, or a rock? We were only 70 yards apart—if my partner hadn’t left his binoculars behind that morning I probably wouldn’t have been shot.

#4. Pressure to Succeed
This is a contributor to many mishaps, not just hunting-related and we men are especially vulnerable. It was the last day of a fairly expensive “meat” hunt, and between us we had only shot one small deer. We both felt pressure to kill at least one deer each and that narrowed my partner’s focus and inhibited his ability to see what was actually there instead of what he wanted to see. Had my partner not felt pressured to hurry up and put meat on the ground I probably wouldn’t have been shot.

#5. Failure to Verify the Target
You might be wondering why this isn’t number one since it is the ultimate safety check. If he’d verified his target I absolutely wouldn’t have been shot… except that he did verify his target. He was convinced, beyond a shadow of a doubt, I was a deer and so he shot with
confidence. That he was wrong is another issue. This was not a case of shooting at movement or some other gross negligence. My partner looked at me through a riflescope for about 30 seconds before shooting. He never saw me and if any of the above-mentioned things had been done he probably would have seen me and I wouldn’t have been shot.

The man who shot me remains my good friend. He is careful and conscientious and yet, despite that and all his years in the woods and on the range, he made a terrible mistake because his mind played a trick on him. Between the thick woods, my dull clothing, the angle of the hill, and the way the light struck the scene he was convinced he was looking at a deer. All of the cues he was relying on told him what he saw had to be a deer. When I took off my hat to expose my pale face he saw a deer’s white rump, and when I waved at him with outstretched fingers he saw antlers.

The bottom line, and the thing I want you to take away from this, is if my friend could make this mistake so could you.

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Please Remember the IHEA-USA When Writing Your Will

As you know, the International Hunter Education Association – United States of America has a commitment to preserving and protecting our right to hunt as well as our hunting heritage. By providing for the IHEA-USA in your will or trust you will help to ensure that future generations will get to experience the same kind of outdoor experiences that you hold so dearly. Please read this testimonial:

“The mission of the International Hunter Education Association – United States of America is so pure that for those of us that hunt and believe in education first and legislation last, I personally have included in my Last Will and Testament 1/2 of my estate be awarded to the IHEA-USA. Hunting for me has been one of life’s great disciplines and made me a better person in so many ways. Having an understanding of our connection with the land, how we both collectively and individually influence our natural resources and the opportunity to actively participate in the management of those resources is key to the future of our hunting heritage.”

–Tim Lawhern

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We urge you to consult your attorney in preparing your will or trust and hope that the following language will be helpful in providing a bequest to IHEA-USA:

“I give, devise and bequeath ___% of what remains of my estate (or $______) to the International Hunter Education Association – United States of America (Tax ID # 37-1145157), a charitable corporation presently having offices at 800 East 73rd Avenue, Unit 2, Denver, CO 80229"

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Bequests of any size are gratefully accepted and sincerely appreciated. However, while IHEA-USA can accept gifts of land, we are not in a position to hold property for any reason. Any land given outright or bequeathed to IHEA-USA will be immediately sold. The proceeds of which will be used to fund our programs.

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There has been a lot written about Hunter Safety and safe gun handling over the years. In the last decade, with frequent attacks on our 2nd Amendment rights and anti-hunting groups steadily growing in our society, Hunter Education has become a mainstay. Not only does Hunter Education help in these battles against our 2nd Amendment rights and our sport, it also protects us as hunters when we practice it afield. With that said, Hunter Education focuses on all aspects of safe gun handling in the field while hunting. Most of it is while you are out in the field with friends, family, or you as a sole hunter. Most of what we teach focuses on before we take a shot or while we are in the process of taking a shot at our intended quarry. What I would like to discuss here is what happens after we take the shot.

After we have identified our target and what is beyond, taken aim with our gun or bow and either pulled the trigger or let the arrow fly, is when we as hunters are in a most vulnerable state.

Why, you might ask? Have you ever seen anyone with buck fever? You have just seen the game animal that you have been hunting. Your excitement builds, and then comes the adrenalin dump and finally you pull the trigger. Your game is down! The excitement of that moment can be overwhelming for some. If you are a hunter, this moment and that feeling is one of the reasons we hunt. It’s a good thing!

Let’s say you have just taken the buck of your life. He is definitely down. You are 20 feet up a tree in some kind of tree stand. Your adrenalin is pumping; you are shaking all over from the excitement. Your first thought is, I have to get down and see this buck up close, I can’t believe I bagged him! This is one of these moments we have dreamed about. This, my fellow hunters, is the time we need to slow down and take a few deep breaths and calm down.

Why? Because with all this excitement, you’re in the perfect state of mind to make a gun handling or tree stand safety mistake and turn the perfect hunt into the perfect disaster.

Over the years we have investigated several of these hunting incidents that occurred after the shot. In this incident, the hunter shot a deer from a climbing tree stand with a .30-06-bolt action rifle. The deer ran off after the shot but the hunter was sure he had hit it. In his excitement after the shot, he chambered another round and forgot to put the safety of the firearm in the safe position. To add to this problem, he then decided to get down and look for the deer. Resting the muzzle of
Professional pitcher Andrew Cashner is known to throw some nasty fastballs. But off the field, it’s all about the Curve®. As a firearms enthusiast and avid outdoorsman, Cashner praises the all-new Taurus Curve for its game-changing design, reliable performance and unparalleled concealability.

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the firearm on his boot, he took his haul line and ran it in front of the trigger. He then pulled up on the haul line to lift the firearm, which put pressure on the trigger, therefore firing the gun and sending a .30-06 round through his foot.

As a hunter, when you are out in the woods and fields of our great world, you want to practice hunter safety always. It is my opinion that we are often at our most vulnerable condition after we take the shot. That brief, exciting time filled with adrenaline, is when we are most likely to use bad judgment or just forget the rules of Hunter Education. This is the time we need to recognize this condition and savor it for what it is. It is also a time to step back, slow down, take a few deep breaths, clear our heads, and settle down before we take any further action. Always remember: Safety First and Always!

**Lessons Learned:**
- All the rules of safe firearms handling apply before, during and after the shot is fired
- Always keep the muzzle pointed in a safe direction
- Always unload your firearm before going into or out of your tree stand
- Never secure your haul line to the trigger guard

“Lesson’s Learned” is a regular feature from the retired wildlife officer supervisors at Hunting and Shooting Related Consultants LLC. They are also authors of BLOOD on the LEAVES Real Hunting Accidents And Lessons in Hunter Safety.
SSSWWEEEEEEET.
browning.com
Social media is lighting up with debates about a host of topics that seemingly just keep coming. Whether it’s how far of a shot is too far, hunters getting death threats for posting hunting photos on their Facebook pages, or hunting behind a high fence is not hunting, to shooting feral hogs with an AR from a helicopter and calling it hunting, or good idea or bad idea to put a GoPro on a spear, spear a black bear and post the footage on the Internet. How we hunt, or how someone else hunts must matter. The truth is, it should matter.

We’re hunting today, not solely because of sportsmen’s efforts to restore game populations from dismal to robust, but because in a democratic society hunting is still supported by the majority of citizens. It is true that when early conservation leaders like Theodore Roosevelt and the organization he formed, the Boone and Crockett Club, began to nationalize the concept of conservation, there was resistance. It was counter-intuitive to say that the best way to save what was left of dwindling wildlife populations was to continue doing what was leading to their near extinction, but that’s exactly what Roosevelt and the club did say. Public hunting should continue, but in a sustainable manner conducted under a framework of laws, a code of conduct and an approach that supported an overall conservation ethic.

All significant human activities are sooner or later conducted under a code, or set of guidelines, that direct appropriate behavior. Without this order there

How Matters

Who wants to talk about hunting ethics and fair chase? Evidently, a lot of sportsmen do.

By Keith Balfourd, Boone & Crockett Club

THEODORE ROOSEVELT, FOUNDER OF THE BOONE AND CROCKETT CLUB, HELPED TO POPULARIZE THE CONCEPT OF FAIR CHASE BY REFUSING TO SHOOT A DEFENSELESS BLACK BEAR WHILE ON A HUNT IN MISSISSIPPI IN 1902. THE RESULT WAS THIS NATIONALY-RELEASED CARTOON, THE BIRTH OF THE TEDDY’S BEAR, AND A STANDARD OF ETHICAL CONDUCT IN THE FIELD SPORTSMEN HAVE FOLLOWED SINCE.
would simply be chaos and the activity would become unacceptable to both participants and non-participants. Consequently, ethics apply in everything we do, including hunting. Our game laws direct ethical behavior in many cases, but just because something is legal, does that mean it is ethical, or good for the public image of hunters and hunting? Beyond the laws established by society, ethics are a matter of personal choice left to each individual. Personal ethics are just that, personal, but individual actions—good and bad—represent the entire group. This is the sticky part when talking ethics.

Because of the personal nature of ethics, they can be a divisive topic. Some would say talking ethics only divides hunters. Others say ethics unites like-minded hunters under a common banner. Then there’s fair chase.

The ethics of fair chase are not as clearly defined as people would like them to be. Beliefs about what is and what is not fair chase, like all personal values, fall on a continuum. Fair chase is more a matter of the “spirit of the hunt” than a strict written code. Hunting beliefs and practices may change over time, but the process of analyzing a situation and properly evaluating the options that will lead to a well-reasoned determination of what fair chase is (and is not) stays constant.

An understanding of fair chase is complicated further by the fact that “fair” has many meanings and uses in the English language, i.e., fair ball, fair weather, fair skin, fair chance, fair play. When the word “fair” is paired with “chase,” it implies hunting is fair or equal—the literal meaning of fair. Hunting is not fair. It is not a field sport like baseball or football where the participants agree to the rules of engagement beforehand. In hunting, the prey has not agreed to anything, nor does it have an equal chance in most cases to kill the human hunter. For most species, escape is the only option.

Therefore, the meaning of fair chase is based on the definition of “fair” that relates to legitimate, honorable, genuine, or appropriate in the circumstances. To complicate matters further, fair chase is associated with the notion of “sport hunting” in the eyes of many hunters and non-hunters even though it does not resemble any sport played on a field or court. The term “sport” in hunting means only a sporting approach. That approach recognizes the advantage of human capabilities, including technologies, and represents a desire to constrain so as to give the animals pursued a legitimate chance to escape. It also recognizes that humans are the alpha predator and there is a need to limit our advantage, which is one of the underpinnings of sustainable use conservation.

There is no denying the fact that what was once unacceptable is now increasingly becoming acceptable. Will there be a price to pay for the end justifies the means? Will hunting’s public approval rating be affected? Are we turning anti-hunting into anti-hunter, or has this always been the case? It’s a good conversation to have, and one we must not be afraid to have.
We started our series on Ethical Hunting in the Spring issue of the IHEA Journal. In summary, we conclude that ethical behavior is the foundation for safe, responsible hunting—indeed, for participating in any shooting sport. We all want our students to be ethical participants in hunting and shooting sports; to be safe, not to hurt others and to present themselves in a positive way.

In Part I we covered Using Dialogue. It is through dialogue and questioning that the instructor explores a subject in-depth and evokes an analysis deeper than what would develop by merely stating rules. Dialogue elicits thought, which is foundational to ethical decision-making the field.

We also covered Focusing on the Facts. Fact-finding is important because facts lead to the truth, but truth is not an end in itself. We explained that facts should be collected and interpreted within a moral framework, conclusions should be made based on those facts and actions should be taken based on those conclusions.

In the Summer issue of this article (Part II), we took it a couple of steps further and covered Why Something is “Good,” which covered you, as an instructor, explaining why an act is or is not ethical. We addressed the Sanctity of Life, which means that hunting must be done in a way that honors the dignity of the animal and eliminates or reduces suffering.

We also addressed that Doing Good is Not Easy. A quick review of this tells us that it is easier to be ethical on the first day of a hunt than on the last day of an unsuccessful hunt. Human nature tends to compel us to cut corners, to take the easy or expedient way. Ethical hunting requires not only mastery of the facts but also self-discipline, self-control and introspection.

This final, and hopefully meaningful concept to you as an instructor addresses our fifth and final point:
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5. Link Actions to Personal Character and Virtue

It is a shallow and dismal life to take the easy or unethical way. Instructors should inspire students toward virtuous behavior and one of the best ways to do that is to demonstrate the relationship between specific actions and larger ethical themes such as personal honor, self-respect and moral integrity.

Show your students how actions illuminate their moral character. Link an action (not taking the shot, picking up the empty hulls) to character and honor. Show how virtuous behavior leads to developing a moral conscience and to that unique joy derived from self-worth and self-respect. The unethical hunter may not only wound a deer. The unethical hunter wounds himself.

The instructor or parent should have a dialogue about the entire hunting experience; the sunsets as well as the harvested animal. Mark Cousins, Hunter Education Coordinator, Colorado Division of Wildlife, wrote, “This is what I think is often lost in today’s instant society, everything is hurried and not enough time is taken to enjoy all the aspects of the hunting trip.”

A dimension of that time for enjoyment includes talking about the ethics of the hunt. Don’t worry if you think you cannot cover every ethical aspect. Do not be deterred even if you think your verbal skills lie somewhere between the Rain Man and a silent movie. The students want you to help them become stronger people. They want to know right from wrong. The lessons you teach about ethical hunting will permeate like quicksilver into all facets of their lives. It all begins with a dialogue and asking simply, “What do you think?”

Michael Sabbeth is a lawyer in Denver, Colorado. He lectures on ethics and rhetoric to law associations and civic and business groups. He is the author of the newly-published book, The Good, The Bad & The Difference: How to Talk with Children About Values. To learn more, visit his website at www.kidsethicsbook.com

Send Us Your Stories!

One of the main goals of the Journal is to provide a platform for the exchange of ideas and teaching experience that can help improve the education process of the more than 700,000 new hunters annually.

In order to fulfill that goal we need the input of instructors in the field. Please submit your stories and/or photos about teaching techniques that work for you, thoughts about the state of our hunting heritage today, anecdotal stories about “it happened to me” in class, visual training aids, etc... don’t worry about spelling or grammar.

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He then added, “We lowered the retail price from $129.99 to $99.99, updated the packaging and styling, and started to offer it in seven modern patterns and colors. We also now offer all the Pro 200 with an optional Behind the Head headband style.

“We strongly believe consumers trust Pro Ears to be one of the most reliable and high quality hearing protection options on the market, and we need to be delivering value to the consumer and dealer network.”

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Christopher Collins
Boise, Idaho

“Christopher Collins embodies what it means to be a hunter education instructor and role model to both youth and beginning hunters,” explained Idaho Southwest Region Volunteer Services Coordinator Jaime Creson in nominating Christopher for the award.

An instructor since 2013, Christopher has taken the lead on 33 courses, averaging 11 courses per year, and assisted six others, certifying 689 students.

For his outstanding contributions, he received in 2013 the Jack Edwards Rookie of the Year award, a prestigious award unique to the Idaho Fish and Game’s southwest region and in 2016 received the program’s highest honor, the Commissioner’s Continuing the Hunting Heritage award. To qualify, recipients must reach the 3,500-point level, a level that takes most instructors at least 15 years to reach. Christopher achieved it in three years.

Christopher participates in most IHEA-sponsored youth hunts, mentoring students and sharing his knowledge during their first hunt. He is currently working on classroom training videos that will be linked to the IHEA website to help instructors. Christopher is also producing a video to advertise IHEA at new instructor orientations.

“Christopher always goes above and beyond volunteering for every project,” Creson said. For example, Christopher and his wife, Crystal, videotaped two mentored hunts, then gave each participant a keepsake video of their hunt.

On a more personal level, Christopher stepped up when a young hunter education graduate lost his father and grandfather, leaving him with no one to teach him hunting skills. Christopher invited the boy and his mother to his home to discuss firearm safety and hunting skills; then accompanied the boy on a coyote hunt—and has made plans for a hunt this fall.

Christopher got his start in hunter education as a scoutmaster, earning his NRA certification so his scouts could earn shooting merit badges. But he knew there was more he could do. It bugged him when he saw unethical people taking kids hunting, starting them on the wrong foot. “I wanted to try and make a difference,” he said.

“If we’re not ethical, we’re not going to have hunting much longer,” he said. “I want to make sure this way of life can continue and I can pass it to my kids and whoever wants to hunt.”

Christopher said he’s learned to balance hunter education with his career and family life. He’s a senior business analyst at Micron Technologies working on mobile applications to allow employees to work from their phones.

“My wife is very, very patient with me,” he said. “If she didn’t understand how passionate I was about this, how much I enjoy teaching it, she wouldn’t let me do it.” He said Crystal is involved too, often accompanying him on youth hunts. “And I take my son, Caden, out with me as well, starting when he was three,” he said. “He’s five now, and it’s building that passion in him already and when he is 12 he is going to be a youth instructor with me.”

“With my career, I just have to walk a fine line between my late-night meetings and my classes,” he said. “It’s tough,” he said, “but if you really want to do something you can fit in in your schedule.”

Christopher wants his students to learn more than basic safety rules. He wants them to have an interest in hunting and “most importantly, I want them to have an understanding of what it takes to be an ethical hunter,” he said. “That will have such a huge role in us keeping our hunting heritage alive.”

Pam Jackson
Oxford, Alabama

“I cannot think of anyone who has put more time, heart, and soul into keeping our youth and adult first-time hunters safe in the woods,” said Alabama
Hunter Education Administrator Marisa Futral about Pam Jackson. “Pam gives of herself without a second thought and never complains about any expense she may incur while doing it. Pam is always the first to arrive and the last to leave, ensuring that all of our events are successful from start to finish.”

For 26 years, Pam has donated countless hours to teaching hunter education to her community and throughout the state, Futral said. A charter member of Alabama’s hunter education association, Pam has served as the board’s secretary/treasurer for seven years.

Pam’s enthusiasm for teaching knows no bounds. She has helped with NRA’s Youth Hunter Education Program, the Alabama Cooperative Extension System’s 4-H shooting sports program and Alabama’s Step-Outside events. And, for the past 14 years she has volunteered at Alabama’s biannual Becoming an Outdoorswoman program where she teaches “Beyond Band-Aids,” drawing on her knowledge and experience as a registered nurse to teach basic first-aid and survival skills.

“Prevention is my key thing,” Pam said. “Be prepared and don’t panic, that’s two of the things we teach upfront. We can prevent problems by being prepared.”

Pam is able to combine three loves into hunter education instruction: her love of family, nursing and hunting.

She and her husband, Jerry, received their hunter education instructor certification together in 1990. Her son likes hunting and often accompanied her as she taught classes. Their daughter hasn’t caught the hunting bug. For the past five years Pam and Jerry have hosted youth hunts on their property. “That is a huge joy to us,” she said. “I’ve had the opportunity of being with several of them as they got their first deer. Very exciting.”

Pam is an acute-care nurse practitioner and also teaches nursing at a community college.

Many times she has taught first-aid and safety aspects of hunter education. “One of the big things my husband and I did was use videos and slides to encourage safety with guns and in treestands,” she said. “We gave them the option to look at them or not because some were pretty gross, but realistic. We try to instill in people that once you pull the trigger, you can’t take it back. You have to be sure of your target and beyond.”

Her Becoming an Outdoorswoman course is popular. “A lot of them don’t have any idea the kind of things you might see or encounter when you are in an outdoor setting, even just hiking,” she said.

Hunter education provides similar opportunities. “There are a lot of children now who have only their mom taking care of them and many of those moms don’t know the first thing about hunting or safety,” she said. “A lot of times if children are interested the moms will come so we get to teach both of them and help them have a safe and hopefully successful hunt. But even if they’re not successful as far as taking a deer, it is successful in that nobody gets hurt and they’ve enjoyed being in the outdoors.

“I really don’t want to see anybody have an accident in the field and that is what hunter education is about. So many folks don’t think it can happen to them so we try hard to make sure they understand it can happen to anyone.”

**Nathan Pettigrew**

**Odessa, Texas**

As skilled and dedicated as he has been as a hunter education instructors for more than ten years, Nathan Pettigrew’s contribution has had far-reaching effects beyond the Hunter Education classroom, according to Texas Hunter Education Administrator Steve Hall.

In addition to certifying more than 1,300 students, Pettigrew serves on the Texas Hunter Education Instructor’s Association board of directors; has
attended 22 conservation and ethics-related workshops; has served as a bowhunter education instructor since 2007 and, since 2015, as Hunter Education area chief, certifying not only hunter education students but also recruiting and training new instructors—as well as monitoring instructors in his area and assisting them in the classroom and field.

“Nathan has crossed the classroom/outdoors barrier,” Hall said, by introducing photography hunts in cooperation with the Texas Youth Hunting Program (TYHP), a non-profit organization dedicated to introducing hunting and providing hunting opportunities for youths. Nathan serves as regional coordinator of TYHP, assisting other volunteer “huntmasters,” providing guidance and equipment.

“The youth hunts hold a special place in Nathan’s heart,” Hall said. “Not only does he see the kids on a daily basis in the classroom, but Nathan also sees them after school at House of the Sycamore Tree.” Nathan and his wife, Micah, founded House of the Sycamore Tree in 2013 as a place where troubled youths and adults learn useful skills to help them cope. House at the Sycamore Tree is described as “the best place in the Permian Basin that offers individuals with disabilities and at-risk (challenged) youth a place to live life,” Hall said.

“Nathan ‘exemplifies what we should aspire to be as individuals,’” he said. “Nathan’s ethos is to serve. He does so without question or asking for recognition.”

Nathan’s start in hunter education came when he was a high-school ag teacher. “I wanted my kids to experience the outdoors so I talked to my administration and got approval to teach hunter education in class,” he said. From there, the classes broadened, reaching into the local college.

“The outdoors has been important to me my entire life,” he said. “Since I was five years old I’ve spent every day of my life out there, every day I can. If I’m not actually in the field, I’m thinking about the field. It’s a heritage. It’s everything we learn about ethics and what’s right and wrong, and integrity.

“It’s characteristics that youth need that they don’t get today; that they can get by learning to appreciate the outdoors, so I wanted to pass it on.”

Nathan is now a biology instructor in an alternative education center for at-risk high-school students. His wife, Micah, is a special-needs teacher. “So we combined both our crafts” and opened the non-profit House of the Sycamore Tree.

“This year, with a grant he received, he plans to implement a TYHP photography hunting class for at-risk students, combining hunter education, outdoors and photography.

He also takes special-needs kids hunting on his personal lease and a lot of weekends are spent on TYHP programs. “Every bit of my life revolves around hunting and being in the field and every bit of my life revolves around hunter education,” he said.

“The most important thing they can learn, in addition to safety, is ethics,” he said. “I’m a strong believer in what we teach in Hunter Education, that there is no referee. You have to do what is right even when no one is looking. You have to be the one controlling the ethics and doing what is right.”

IHEA World Charter Organization is Formed

History of IHEA
- First Hunter Education Coordinator Meeting held in 1967.
- Steering committee was formed in 1971.
- North American Association of Hunter Safety Coordinators was formed in 1972.
- Renamed to International Hunter Education Association (IHEA) in 1989.
- IHEA restructures into independent national organizations (IHEA-USA, IHEA Canada and IHEA Mexico) in 2012.
- IHEA charter organization was formed in 2016.

IHEA Purpose
- Provide collaborative platform for international entities of IHEA, the hunting industry and hunting-related NGOs
- Identify needs/opportunities; provide input/influence
- Build consensus for standards and reciprocity
- Provide legitimacy and support to countries
- Messaging related to value of hunting and role of hunting in conservation.
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With hunting seasons in full swing for big game, upland game, waterfowl and many small game and varmint species, we know that many of you reading this magazine are spending every available hour afield, filling tags and freezers and making memories.

But did you know that the National Shooting Sports Foundation (NSSF) has a variety of resources hunters can use year round whether it’s whitetail deer, jack rabbits, pheasants or coyotes you’re after?

NSSF is the trade association for the firearms industry, meaning its primary work involves serving the interests of its manufacturing, retailing and range members and finding ways to improve their businesses. Of course, those businesses wouldn’t be without millions of hunters and recreational shooters out there using their products and services, and so NSSF also works to serve the public. Let’s take a look at just a few of the resources you can find on www.nssf.org under the “Hunting” tab that are specifically intended to improve your time in the field.

Find a Place to Hunt—This link allows you to search more than 1,000 bird hunting preserves, research available state hunting lands through state wildlife agency links and federal land where hunting is allowed through the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service’s link.

Find an Outfitter—Ready to take on a new hunting adventure but not sure where to start? Seek out a reputable expert for your next hunting challenge through links to the governing guide associations for dozens of U.S. states and Canadian territories.

Game Recipes—“From field to table” is
the mantra of almost any hunter. Discover all sorts of delicious ways to use the meat you worked so hard to put in your freezer.

**Share Your Harvest**—If you’ve had an exceptional hunting season and find your freezer overflowing, then donating healthy, fresh game meat to local charities makes tremendous sense. Your hard work and the animal don’t go to waste, and you get a chance to make a difference in the life of someone who’s struggling. This link has a great table showing the impact hunters have when they donate their game meat to charitable food banks, and you’ll find a link that lets you search for donation sites near you.

There’s much, much more. Just under the “Hunting” tab of www.nssf.org alone you’ll find a library of videos on subjects such as getting your bird dog ready for the season, wingshooting safety and how to prep for your first elk hunt, among others. We also have a link that lets you print your own targets, great for making sure that rifle’s sighted correctly or getting some extra practice in before you head to your tree stand, and there’s a terrific link that lets you send a personalized email postcard invitation to a friend asking them to join you on a hunt.

**Let’s not forget about safety**—In fact, let’s make that your first priority every time you pick up your firearm to practice, go hunting with it, clean it, put it away for safe storage or even just pick it up to admire it. The “How to Get Started” link under that same “Hunting” tab has loads of safety information, including a full list of firearms handling safety rules and links to finding a hunter education course near you. When you’re done there, click on the big “Safety” tab back at the top of www.nssf.org. There you’ll find a library of firearms safety videos, links to finding safety courses, downloadable literature on firearms safety and wildfire prevention (which should be part of any safe hunter’s knowledge bank when using firearms outdoors), a full catalog of safety materials teachers can access and information on NSSF’s Project ChildSafe and “Own it? Respect it. Secure it.” nationwide firearms safety campaigns.

No matter what game you pursue this season, NSSF wishes you the best of luck. Enjoy this special time afield, whether it’s time by yourself in an evening deer blind or pushing the pheasant fields with a dozen friends and family members, but above all else be safe in what you do—because safe is what makes these great times great memories.
StayTightSling Provides an Important Measure of Safety and Convenience—When Carrying a Firearm on Your Shoulder by a Sling

Hunters have long struggled with keeping a slinged firearm on their shoulder, and often resort to holding the sling in place with one hand or the other. StayTightSling solves that problem and allows you to keep both hands free for climbing, stalking, carrying other items, using binoculars or any other task.

Controlling your firearm and assuring it is pointed in a safe direction is an important aspect of hunting and StayTightSling adds to that control factor, assuring your firearm doesn’t slip off your shoulder and cause a safety hazard.

StayTightSling attaches to your sling, wraps around your torso and reattaches to the sling to provide safe and hands-free carrying. A quick-release snap allows you to quickly deploy your firearm when the need arises.

StayTightSling will also fit any type of shoulder-strap device, such as golf bags, beach bags, briefcases, laptop cases or any other shoulder-strapped device you want kept in place with the ease of hands-free carry. Also, it adjusts for a comfortable fit on virtually any size person.

Attachment is easy. You simply attach the metal clip to your sling, remove the sling from the firearm and slide the receiver half of the buckle onto the sling about 12 inches below the swivel, then reattach your sling to the rifle. Then, you simply cinch it tight around your torso.

It can be quickly changed from one carry item to another in just a couple minutes so you can use it on multiple items.

The StayTightSling comes with a one-year manufacturer’s defect warranty. Available at StayTightSling.com. There is a $10 discount to Instructors using the code “IHEA.”

For more information go to: www.ihea-usa.com/instructors/special-offers-for-instructors

Instructor Access for IHEA-USA Website

Hunter Education Instructors have the opportunity to purchase many items at a discounted rate on the “Special Offers” section of the IHEA-USA website! For your exclusive access go to: www.ihea-usa.com/instructors/special-offers-for-instructors. Just click on the company hyperlink you are interested in and, when prompted, enter “gohunt” as your password. The password has no space and is all lowercase.
Volunteering as a hunter education instructor is a personal commitment and sometimes challenging. Obtaining quality hunter safety and educational materials shouldn’t be. The National Shooting Sports Foundation® has been supporting hunter education instructors for more than 50 years.

A longtime supporter of the International Hunter Education Association, NSSF has been in the forefront of developing multimedia hunter safety and education materials. We provide printed and electronic materials for volunteer instructors—most of which is free. And when your students graduate and are looking for places to hunt or for additional information to develop their skills and knowledge, the answers are simply a click away!

Log on to nssf.org/safety and order your materials today. All the help you need is at your fingertips.
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Mossberg is proud to help support the education of our youth. In the spirit of this commitment, we are offering specialized firearms to IHEA instructors to help in the training of the next generation of great hunters and shooters.

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- Mossberg 930 Semi-Automatic Shotgun
- Mossberg 935 Combo Pump-Action Shotgun
- Mossberg International 832 Pumpster Shotgun
- Mossberg 464 Lever-Action Rifle

SAFETY TIP: ALWAYS KEEP THE MUZZLE POINTED IN A SAFE DIRECTION

BUILT RUGGED. PROUDLY AMERICAN.