

NRA Firearms Training Has Real-Life Benefits

by Heidi Rao - Saturday, October 26, 2019



Photo credit: Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources

As America's firearm safety and education leader, **the National Rifle Association (NRA) offers a multitude of training opportunities** to the public. Some training accounts for things you learn and then use every time you handle a firearm while other training, such as self-defense, you hope to never have to use. Additionally, the benefits of NRA training are assets for the trained individual as well as to others in the community. Sometimes the benefits of training were unexpected, resulting in great or memorable outcomes.

As an NRA Training Counselor, I conduct many NRA training courses throughout the year, certifying individuals for a myriad of reasons. Some individuals seek training for personal growth. Some look to train other folks professionally in the proper use of firearms. Lastly, there are those who use their training to volunteer for various youth shooting sports and hunting organizations while promoting our Second Amendment freedoms and the safe handling and use of firearms.

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These in-depth courses ensure that NRA-Certified Instructors are the best in the business. Instructor courses include NRA Rifle Instructor, NRA Shotgun Instructor and NRA Pistol Instructor. There are two requirements before anyone is permitted to enroll in one of these courses. First, everyone must complete and pass the NRA Basic Rifle, NRA Basic Shotgun or the NRA Basic Pistol Course depending on the NRA Instructor Course that the individual is seeking. Second, the individual must first shoot a qualifying course and attain a passing score to enter the class. These requirements ensure every instructor is well-trained and qualified.

As an NRA Training Counselor, it is always good to hear from one of my students. After one of my classes I received an email from a student who shared how being a new NRA Shotgun Instructor can benefit the public:

From: Ma D.

To: Heidi Rao

Sent: Sunday, May 19, 2019, 3:05:36 PM MST

Subject: Shotgun Instructor course

Thanks for everything to you as well.

Becke (my son) and I shot sporting clays today at ASC, and as we checked in, a couple of guys from the Netherlands were checking in as well but had never shot clays. Only one of them had ever shot a shotgun! I offered to go with them and got to use my newly learned techniques. Worked out great for all, and one did better than I did :).

Hearing this story underscored the fact that as an NRA Training Counselor I had received first-class training from my own instructors at NRA headquarters when I was in training and received my NRA Training Counselor credentials. It further reinforced that I had paid it forward to my students as one of them was able to use what he learned in class to help another shotgun shooter. By helping these individuals from the Netherlands, not only were they introduced to the value and benefits of properly trained NRA Instructors, they were shown that the NRA as an organization is a benefit to the public as a whole and not as the media often negatively portrays.



A Girl and A Gun uses all NRA-certified instructors, and they are all enthusiastic about promoting the group's programs.

I sometimes conduct instructor classes for individuals whose reason for certification is to benefit their organization. Knowing that I can help these organizations reach their training goals gives me a sense of pride. Here is an example of one of many groups that has benefited from NRA Certification:

I am honored to announce that Deborah, Sherry, Robyn, and Rebecca have met and completed the required training to become NRA Certified Pistol Instructors.

I do believe that we are the only chapter in AG & AG that all the leadership are Certified NRA Pistol Instructors. I am so proud of these ladies. Without all the help, time and dedication of these ladies, we couldn't have all the activities and programs that we have. I love that they display the same passion for continued training and education so they can bring it back to share with our chapter ladies.

–Cindy, AGAG Facilitator

Every now and then, you get a different type of request for a class. I was contacted by a “Skipper” of a Sea Scout Ship. He wanted an NRA-Certified Instructor to conduct the Sea Scout shooting course so that the Sea Scouts on his ship could earn their marksmanship awards. Since I was not aware of that program, I researched it and learned all that was required was to have an NRA-Certified Instructor administer the requirements and shooting course. I agreed. It turned out to be one of the most memorable courses I ever taught. It also turned out to be a course that impacted a young person’s life in the best possible way. I soon received this email from a young man who was in the class:



Due to the training that Ryan Shaw received through an NRA-Certified Instructor while a Sea Scout, he ended up placing in the top 10 out of nearly 1,200 in his plebe year at the U.S. Naval Academy.

From: Ryan S.

To: Heidi Rao

Sent: Thursday, April 4, 2019, 11:47:04 PM CDT

Subject: Success story from NRA Pistol training

Mrs. Rao,

Please find attached my Certificate, thank you very much for teaching the class. It was an awesome experience and it has reinvigorated my interest in shooting sports.

I took the class to test and verify my skills as a marksman in scouting and in my personal endeavors. I also took the class to more formally educate myself about proper use, care and purchase of different handguns. I did not realize what a large variety of firearms activities there are and what a large group of people participated in so many different ways.

To me, the Second Amendment represents our right to protect ourselves and the spirit of independence, cooperation and responsibility Americans enjoy.

Ryan S.

Boatswain, Ship 45 "Kraken"

U.S. Power Squadron, JN

Needless to say, I was very proud of this young man. It is very good to see the impact and benefits of the NRA that come from its leadership in the firearms safety, education and training arena. But just when I thought I knew the limits of the benefits of NRA training, I received another email. The following is the email I received from the father of the young man who sent the above email:

From: Robin S.

To: Heidi Rao

Heidi & John,

I want to thank you and John!

Ryan is at the United States Naval Academy. During Plebe Summer they are taken to the weapons range (Yup ... weapons, it's not the NRA) and qualify on pistols and rifles.

Ryan was one of only 9 out of 1,198 that shot Double Expert.

I credit the Sea Scout/NRA shooting sports for helping him earn that distinction!

THANK YOU!

R

WOW! The real impact of NRA training hit me. As hunters, it is not just so we can fill our game bags more efficiently. And as shooting enthusiasts, it is not just so we can break clay pigeons more easily or get a better score on our target. Well... yes, it is those things too. But the real benefit to NRA training is why the NRA was established in 1871 in the first place. It was to prepare our future and current fighting men and now women to protect the United States of America, our freedoms, our Constitution—including our 2nd Amendment—and the citizens of this country.

About the author: Heidi Rao's job requires her to travel the state of Texas, coordinating programs on a variety of outdoor-related topics, on many of which she is considered an expert. These topics include species-specific workshops (alligator, feral hog, white-tailed deer and waterfowl), small and big-game hunting, trapping, hunter responsibilities, game laws and ethics, and outdoor survival. Additionally, Heidi conducts shooting clinics on rifle, shotgun, handgun, archery and crossbow, reaching thousands of adults and youth annually.

Heidi is very involved with the National Rifle Association (NRA) and is an NRA Training Counselor, certified to teach NRA Shotgun, Rifle and Pistol instructor courses. She is also an NRA Shotgun Coach. She is a member of the Youth Programs Committee, meeting near the NRA Headquarters in Virginia each year. Lastly, **Heidi is profiled on NRA Women TV: New Energy.**

Heidi conducts seminars addressing different sportsmen and conservation groups on both the national and international levels. She is well respected in her field and has received numerous professional awards in hunting and conservation. Some of these awards include Professional of the Year and Executive Director's Awards presented by the International Hunter Education Association and the Houston Safari Club's Conservationist of the Year. Heidi has written several books about hunting large predators in her area of Texas, teaching kids to hunt and shoot, and about firearms. These publications include:

- "Entering the World of the Predator,"
- "Entering the World of the Predator—National Parks Edition,"
- "Introducing Kids to Hunting and Firearms,"
- "How to Raise a Wild Child,"
- "A Boy's Guide to Firearms," and
- "A Girl's Guide to Firearms."