



N.C. Hunter Education Program Newsletter

First Quarter 2014



The men and women who volunteer as hunter education instructors serve as teachers, mentors and coaches. The service they deliver is, quite literally, lifesaving.

Michael Nye is D-6 Hunter Education Specialist

Michael Nye has joined us as the hunter education specialist for the southern Piedmont.

She will serve in District 6, which is made up of Union, Anson, Richmond, Moore, Montgomery, Stanly, Cabarrus, Mecklenburg, Rowan and Davidson counties.

Her duties will include providing instruction in hunter ethics and responsibility, wildlife management and conservation, firearms, wildlife identification, survival and first aid, specialty hunting and tree stand safety.

Nye is a Robeson County native and participated in shooting sport competitions in high school. She has a bachelor's degree in fisheries and wildlife science from N.C. State University. Most recently, she was with Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks as a hunting access coordinator and worked with Montana's Becoming an Outdoors-Woman program.

"My goal as a hunter education specialist is to bring a deeper understanding of why hunter education is so important," Nye said. "Though firearms safety is the key component in our instruction, hunter education is also a great way to build upon the knowledge and respect for our outdoors. It allows the participants to gain a better insight of hunter harvest as a management tool, while instilling a passion for conserving our natural resources and our hunting heritage."

The Hunter Education Program provides free hunter education courses throughout the year in every county. There are no minimum age requirements; however, classes are taught at a sixth grade level and tests must be completed without assistance. Certification is accepted in every state and province in North America.

"Hunting is one of the safest and most widely enjoyed activities in North Carolina," said Travis



Michael "Mikey" Nye joins us in District 6

Casper, the Hunter Education Program coordinator. "Hunters are the backbone of conservation and it is important that we broaden participation.

"We're glad to have Michael leading our efforts in District 6."

She takes the post previously held by Randy Thomas, who retired in November after a 31-year career with the Wildlife Commission. Thomas was instrumental in many facets of conservation, including bringing the Becoming an Outdoor-Woman program to North Carolina in 1997.

For more information on local hunter education courses or the Home From The Hunt™ safety campaign, contact Nye at 704-218-1206 or e-mail michael.nye@ncwildlife.org.

Hunter Education Instructors of the Year

The N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission has recognized nine volunteers who teach hunting education as the agency's "Instructors of the Year." The instructors, each representing one of nine districts statewide, were presented a commemorative model Henry Golden Boy .22 caliber rifle in tribute to their service, in ceremonies held in their home communities.

These nine volunteers provided exemplary service in the past year and deserve this recognition. They and the nearly 1,000 other instructors currently active in North Carolina have earned our gratitude and respect, while making huge contributions to conservation. It is worth pointing out how their selfless commitment saves the state considerable money while saving lives.



D-1 David Sampson, Chowan County



D-2 Ed Ryan, Craven County



D-3 Greg Earp, Johnston County



D-4 Charles Perry, Harnett County



D-5 Frank Williams, Alamance County



D-6 David Strange, Davidson County



D-7 Anita Tharpe, Wilkes County



D-8 Johnnie Thomas, Catawba County



D-9 Ray Crisp, Henderson County



On Target with the State Hunter Education Coordinator

A college professor at UNC-Wilmington always got after us to have passion for our chosen pursuits. In an introduction class, he always taught students knot tying even though it seemed to have nothing to do with the course's subject matter. He would scream, holler, and jump up and down about knots and rope. He was definitely passionate about tying knots. Needless to say, all of us thought he was nuts. Knot tying was taught at the beginning of semester and the professor would end this weeklong session with a discussion on passion. He told us whatever we decided to pursue in life we should have passion for it, just as he did on teaching knot tying.

All hunter education instructors I have met have passion and it is contagious. The Wildlife Resources Commission recognized nine instructors for their contributions to this program. Every one of our instructors is worthy of recognition and we thank you for your passion and commitment.

Another example of passion was recognized in November when we celebrated, "The Legend of the Big Guy!" Hunter Education Specialist Randy Thomas has completed his career with the Wildlife Resources Commission. Randy began his legend with the WRC in 1982 in Richmond County as a wildlife officer. Randy has many successes in his long career.

I would like to thank Randy for his guidance, counsel and more importantly, his friendship! I learned a lot from "The Big Guy."

He was always a good person to bounce an idea or a problem off of. Randy taught us something worth doing was worth doing big. We wish him and his family the best in all their future endeavors!



Randy "Big Guy" Thomas

As you have read, we have a new District Six Hunter Education Specialist, Michael Nye, who began her duties in December. There is no doubt Michael will be an asset in creating pathways to participation in safe and responsible hunting while ensuring the future of conservation.

With her past experience, it is obvious she is passionate about our conservation heritage and will bring new and innovative ideas.

The year has changed to 2014, and we have had personnel changes, with more change on the horizon. But our passion for hunter education and conservation remains. This passion will continue to push the Hunter Education Program toward great accomplishments. Thanks to each of you for the enthusiasm you bring in promoting our hunting and conservation heritage.

Until next time, keep your muzzles high and powder dry!

Travis Casper

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Adapting to Change and Making it Better

By Chet Clark

District 1 Hunter Education Specialist

Change. For some, that word can scare the dickens out of them. But it's coming, it's here, it's already been. Change is all around us. It can cause turmoil, strife, hurt feelings or a frumpy face. It can cause us to yell and scream and throw our hands in the air.

Or... it can cause us to re-examine ourselves and how we look at the world, how we conduct ourselves and our business.

If we allow ourselves to look at change with a clear mind and open eyes, we may find the reason for it is necessary. Too often we tend to concentrate on right in front of our face and neglect to look to the horizon.

I was told by a guy that I used to coach football with, "If you always do what you always did, you'll always get what you always got." There's some hard truth to that. I'm a firm believer if it works, don't mess with it. However, if I can make it work better, then I'm going down that road. We, as hunter educators, tend to lie in the "traditional" field of thought when it comes to what we do.

There's another saying that I like: "Tradition does nothing but stand in the way of progress." I have no idea whose mouth that came from, but I like it.



Survival skills at Advanced Workshop. Photo by William Ryan

When it comes to hunter education, we have to be able to adapt to the landscape, the habitat. The push for changes in our way of teaching and recruiting new hunters is our new landscape.

People want quick and easy. We like to take plenty of time with students to teach them content and safety. Not a bad thing by the way. People don't have time. We say, "Make time." This one's changing. People don't like hoops. In some ways, we have created an obstacle course. But, we're cleaning it up. People want to have fun. We like to scare them into being safe. Effective, but there's a better way. People like to use the technology that is available. We give books, pamphlets and lectures. We can adapt to this as well.

A growing amount of people come to class with an "organic" vibe. We like camo and blaze orange. But these "new folks" will be a huge boost to the hunting community.

The bottom line is the world around us has changed. We as hunter educators must change as well. We've done a fantastic job through the years. After all, hunting accidents have decreased by 50 percent over the last 20 years due to hunter education. That's something we hang our hat on. For us to continue to be effective and have a place at the table, we have to exchange our red plaid coat and blue jeans for some blaze orange and mossy oak.



Archery fun at Advanced Workshop. Photo by William Ryan

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So what can we do? What's happening is that there is a huge push to use technology. So, let's get on board. Use as much multimedia as possible in your classroom. Use computer programs (free downloads at www.huntercourse.com/hetools), use DVDs, use a Powerpoint, use sounds and animations. Always use hands-on materials, props, walks outdoors, get the class up and out of their seats, whatever.

While I'm on my soapbox, let's talk about recruitment. This is the responsibility of all of us. We should strive to introduce someone new to the hunting world. It's one of my most enjoyable things to do, as I'm sure it is for many of you. We carry folks young and old on a hunt often, although maybe not as often as we may like but, we all do our part. However, the hunting population has declined from its former glory. Why? Urbanization, technology, time restraints, lack of hunting grounds, etc. No. Well, maybe, but no.



Change can bring success. Photo by Jason Yarbrough



Getting all ages involved is a priority. Photo by Melissa McGaw

Here's Chet Clark's theory: Once upon a time, as the world turned, more and more adults got more and more things to do. As those adults got busier, they thought less and less of hunting and more and more of those "things." These adults stopped hunting as much as they used to and eventually altogether. Those adults had kids that were raised not knowing the joys of hunting and as a result had their own kids that were further removed from it.

And BANG! Here we are a nation full of second generation non-hunters.

What the heck can we do about that? Well, we can target those adults more for one thing. We love to take kids hunting and show 'em the ropes. But, when those kids go home who's going to take them back out? If we concentrate on adults more and we teach them, then they can take themselves. They can continue learning and eventually take their own kids hunting. We can train one and they'll bring along another one, or two, or three — getting more bang for our buck.

It's human nature to go toward pleasure and away from pain. Change can be a hard pill to swallow. But, it can be the medicine for our pain. I think we've been too busy skipping along in our camo pants shooting bucks and calling turkeys to notice what's happening. But, it's gotten our attention now and we'll soon be skipping again. We just have to not be dinosaurs. Those big lizards didn't fare too well.

N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission
Hunter Education Program
Be Courteous, Be Careful, Be Seen, Be Safe
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Marketing Effort Leads to Successful Archery Fun Event

The Hunter Education Program and the N.C. Bowhunters Association held an “Archery Fun Day” on Jan. 4 at the Centennial Campus Center for Wildlife Education in Raleigh as a special promotion and marketing event.

Developed by our marketing director in conjunction with “movie trailer” ads that appeared in local theaters during the holidays, the idea was to capitalize on the popularity of “The Hunger Games” sequel and reach a non-traditional audience for both the agency and archery as a hobby, competitive sport and method of hunting. Despite cold weather, the event was gauged a success, most of all by the 53 participants.



Marketing efforts combined text messages and movie ads.

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