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On target: Women take Friends of NRA pistol training class

By ALAN LEVINE
Staff Writer

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Members of the Pinal County chapter of the Friends of the National Rifle Association, along with members of the Arizona Women's Shooting Association, conducted a pistol training class for women on March 24 at the Casa Grande Police Department's shooting range.

The funding for the training session was provided by a grant from the NRA which, in turn, was made possible through the fundraising efforts of the FNRA. The Pinal group will hold its annual dinner and auction on Saturday, April 28, at the Pinal Fair & Events Center.

"The money that we raise at our yearly banquet goes toward funding programs like Eddie Eagle, Women on Target, Refuse to be a Victim and Junior ROTC shooter training," said Dale Cassity, FNRA member and one of the coordinators of the event. "The money also goes for range improvements and other education-based grant programs."

Cassity noted that a few years ago, the city of Casa Grande received \$25,000 for improvements to the public range, and two years ago, the committee awarded \$25,000 to the Casa Grande Trap Club to build skeet houses so that children could learn to shoot skeet as part of the Junior Scholastic Clay Program through Arizona Game and Fish.

The Women on Target pistol training session that took place on March 24 at the police range just off Arica Road, north of the public range and the Casa Grande Trap Club, is an example of how money from the FNRA dinner-auctions are being used locally. Nearly two dozen women took part in the training session, which covered issues from pistol safety to gun care and maintenance to marksmanship and concluded with several target-shooting sessions.

Some of the women had their own pistols, ranging in type, make and caliber, but when it came time for them to put into practice what they had learned during the seminar, each was provided with a .22-caliber pistol, because the light recoil would better enable them to get accustomed to discharging a weapon, which was important, because some of the women had never fired a weapon before.

Later on, some of the students graduated to higher-caliber pistols, mostly 9 mm's and a few .38-caliber revolvers, although a couple of women were able to handle .45-caliber semi-automatics.

The safety class was conducted by Carol Ruh of New River, who's been teaching gun safety and marksmanship classes for 12 years. She also shoots competitively, both rifle and pistol, and she's a trained tactical shooter who has had bodyguard training.

"This was an NRA-sanctioned event," Ruh said at the time of the training session, "and it was developed to introduce women to the shooting sports. We go through the nomenclature, the parts of the gun and how they operate, and then we do the marksmanship. We teach them how to stand, how to hold the gun correctly, how to load the weapon, and then we get them out on the range to shoot at the targets."

"It's amazing how well women do when it comes to hitting the target, and you can see by today's targets just how accurate women can be, especially those that had never fired a gun before."

Ruh added an interesting note. The women trained their sights on and fired rounds at traditional bulls eye targets, because the NRA doesn't allow the use of humanoid-shaped silhouette targets or those with pictures of a generic person pointing a pistol back at the shooter. "The NRA is very clear about that," she said.

Also on hand to help the women on the firing line were AWSA members Brian and Patsy Morris, Katie Paulson, Ruh's husband Peter and Cassity. All are certified NRA instructors.

Although the NRA is well known as a staunch supporter of the Second Amendment, the Right to Bear Arms, since 1871, the organization's major objective has been to provide basic training in the safe handling and proper use of firearms. Today, more than 72,000 NRA-certified instructors continue the tradition of public service by conducting basic firearms training throughout the United States.

For information on the Women on Target program, call Donna at 251-0157.

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Alan Levine/Dispatch photo. Nearly two dozen women took part in the Women on Target pistol training session held on March 24 at the Casa Grande Police Department's shooting range. The session included instruction in pistol safety and gun care and concluded with several target-shooting sessions.



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