

FIELD NOTES



Vermont Fish & Wildlife Hunter Education

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Thank You for another successful fall season by Ali Thomas

Thanks to all the Volunteer Hunter, Bowhunter and Trapper Education Instructors for another year of great courses offered throughout Vermont! Educating people around the state who are interested in getting certified is no small task. In the Hunter Education office, staff is often communicating with people who request

alternative methods of learning, as no two learners are the same. What is so encouraging is how willing the Volunteer Instructors always are to do whatever it takes to help all people, regardless of their specific needs, become safe and ethical hunters. This willingness to educate all learners shows that our Instructors are truly student-focused and have a passion for passing on their hunting and trapping knowledge and skills. The Hunter Education team appreciates all your time and effort dedicated to the program. We would not reach so many Vermonters without your wonderful instruction!

"Instructors were very knowledge and complimented each other with their teaching methods, & sharing knowledge & experiences. Safety was paramount in all respects. Hands on demonstrations with tree stands, ground blinds, use of compass & target shooting were great. I was pleased with the number of young people & women in attendance and the enthusiasm of the class as well as the instructors. Watching the young & new hunters track a simulated blood trail through the woods was fantastic. I highly recommend this class and instructors for new & experienced persons. Thank you."

-Fred Weber, student from Randolph Fish & Game's Bow Hunter Course

Memorable Moments



Each class brings new memories and experiences but some stand out more than others.

Instructor Lou Maraget shared a moment with his son, Cooper.

After years of certifying students in hunter education, he had the chance to officially certify his son. What a special family moment. We hope the Maragets enjoy years of hunting together! We hear Cooper has his eyes on a certain backyard squirrel this fall.

Teaching for decades.

David Zsido, a Hunter Education Instructor for 40 years, shared this photo of the 2018 Hunter Education graduates from the course at the Mendon Fish & Game Club.



Department Updates!

A few quick updates to let you all know about:

- **We Moved!** In June, the National Life Building experienced a fire in the Davis 2 Building. Because of this, all of the Fish & Wildlife Department has moved to the Dewey Building (the building where the licensing office has always been). Our new address is: **1 National Life Drive, Dewey Building, Montpelier VT 05602**. Please don't use any old addresses (we aren't at Barre anymore!).
- **We have a new website!** Our old website crashed a few months back. Since then, our website folks have been busy developing a new website. It is ready, and it is at the same old address: www.vtfishandwildlife.com. What would you like to see on the instructor corner of the website? You can navigate to the [instructor corner here](#).
- **Dylan!** Dylan Brooks, our longtime seasonal employee, is moving on to a new job. Please wish him the very best as he leaves the Department! His official last day was Friday, September 28th. We are sad to see him go but we wish him well!

"Hi everyone,

As some of you have probably heard, my hours as a temporary employee are out for this year. Unlike previous years, this time I have a full-time job lined up. I just wanted to let everyone know personally how much I have learned from you all and how much I enjoyed working with you. Thank you for making me feel welcome and for all that you do for this program and for prospective hunters all over this state (and sometimes others too!). I have thoroughly enjoyed my time with Fish and Wildlife and no small part of that was because of all of you. Your passion to share what you love and the enthusiasm in which you do it is infectious. I'm sure this won't be the last you see of me, I plan on helping with various events in the future and am always willing to help with a class or seminar. Best of luck to everyone and don't be a stranger!"

-Dylan Brooks

- **Nate!** Nathan Lafont is our other seasonal employee. He has worked for the Green Mountain Conservation Camps, the hatcheries, and he is a long-time hunter. He has been working with us since March 2018, and we love having him on the team. Nate's hours will be up just before deer season. You can call him at 802-828-1193 or email him at Nathan.Lafont@vermont.gov.

"Hey everybody,

It's been great to meet and interact with a lot of you since I got here in March. I'm sure I only interacted with a fraction of our Instructors but from what I saw the future of hunting in Vermont is in good hands. I know we have faced some unforeseen challenges this year, but we remain strong and passionate. It is looking like I will be on board with the Hunter Education team until around the first week of November. I wish I could say I am sad about leaving but as we all know, that is going to be the perfect time to get out of work and get into the woods! Wish me luck, I'll need it!"

-Nate Lafont

- **Tess!** Tess Prestage was hired this spring, after the retirement of a staple in the Licensing Division, Sherry Barrows. When hiring for Sherry's job selling licenses, the Department decided that Tess could also spend part of her time on Hunter Education. We are so glad to have Tess as part of the team! You can call her at 802-828-1193 or email her at Tess.Prestage@vermont.gov.

"Hi everyone,

I am very excited to join Hunter Education. I have an administrative and environmental education background. Most of my free time is spent outside, preferably near a river and surrounded by trees. I'm passionate about conservation and environmental stewardship. It's been a joy working with you thus far and I feel honored to be a part of your team."

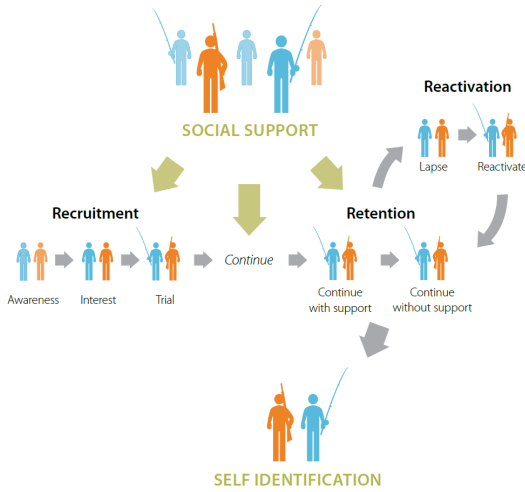
-Tess Prestage

Mentoring New Hunters in Vermont

by Nicole Meier

Recruitment, Retention, and Reactivation

As you all know by now, R3 (hunter/angler recruitment, retention, and reactivation) is big in the outdoor world. R3 is a concept not only embraced by government organizations, but also by retail partners, probably most notably, [Cabela's](#). The keystone of effective R3 programming is social support for new and current hunters.



Social Support

Think back to when you first started hunting and fishing. Who introduced you to it? Who took you out into the woods? Who encouraged you to buy your first gun? Who told you stories that got you excited to hunt on your own, or with others? In the old days, those people might have been your parents, your friends, your family members.

Today, with hunter numbers declining, more and more people are becoming interested in hunting but have little or no social support system to help guide them and reinforce hunting culture. Despite our efforts to educate people through our advanced seminars, it isn't enough. People need friends and a community that reinforces hunting – they need people they can talk to about where to buy a gun, how to scout properly, and to share stories and experiences.

Mentoring System

This is where mentoring comes in. At the regional meetings held this spring, many instructors talked about taking students hunting or scouting after their hunter education class. What if we made this a formal program? An option that instructors can take up (or not) based on their willingness and their availability?

Mentors referred to new hunters will be certified instructors with a valid hunting license. It is important that hunting mentors know and believe in the mission of the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department, are of exceptional ethical quality, and are experts in firearm safety.

At regional meetings, many instructors said that they wished they had more time available to devote to hunter education. Currently, all instructors must teach in at least one course every other year AND attend at least one in-person training or banquet every other year to remain certified. If an instructor decides on mentoring during any year, this will satisfy the teaching requirement for that year.

Hunting mentors will be encouraged to take continuing education courses such as a mentor training and a CPR/First Aid training. We will begin offering these courses on an as-needed basis. Our first of these courses will probably be over the winter of 2018-19.

New hunters will need to fill out liability forms, but instructors will also be covered under the state of Vermont's insurance (as you are already when you teach classes).

The first step in the mentor process is just to identify people who need mentoring. When signing up for a hunter, bowhunter, or trapper education course, student will be asked, "Would you like to be contacted by a hunting mentor after your hunter education course?" We will use these answers to begin pairing up new hunters with experienced mentors.

Not much is hashed out with the program just yet, but we are jumping in head first with it. Join us! Are you interested in becoming a mentor? Know someone who would be good at it? Let us know!

Teacher Toolbox

Here are some lessons, videos and documents that Instructors Might find useful.

Knuckle Mountain by Nate Lafont



It's one of my favorite lessons and all it requires is a topographic map, a dark colored marker, and your hand. When doing my map and compass or orienteering section of a course I like to explain how to read and use a topo map. The idea of taking a 3-dimensional mountain and drawing it on a 2-dimensional map can sometimes get confusing for the student and I have found this method to create an "ohh" or a light bulb type of moment when it all clicks. So, you start with a closed fist with your knuckles exposed to create "Knuckle Mountain". Then use the

marker to draw in some contour lines as accurately as you can around each one. It will be easy to see the peaks and valleys until you open your hand, palm down and the mountains disappear, but the lines remain. The students are now able to tell you where the peaks and valleys were even though they are no longer there.

Helpful Links

R3 and Mentoring

- Minnesota R3 Summit — Hunting & Fishing Recruitment, Retention and Reactivation: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mtcQgv4I2rc>
- Matt Dunfee Reviewing the Outdoor Recreation Adoption Model: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cZocnpKWk50>
- Building an R3 Culture with Cabela's Scott Wanetka: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IG_fbnK0EuE
- Locavore.Guide: <http://locavore.guide/>
- IHEA-USA: <http://www.ihea-usa.org/instructors/hunter-recruitment-and-retention>
- Minnesota DNR R3 Toolkit: http://files.dnr.state.mn.us/fish_wildlife/outreach/r3/r3_toolkit.pdf

For Use in Classes

- Chain of Respect – Hunting Ethics: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z80IXmqFky8>
- Midway USA Gun Safety Videos for Hunters and Shooters: <https://www.midwayusa.com/gun-safety>
- Tree Stand Safety Video National Shooting Sports Foundation: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Oc-6o9GaHtY>
- CVA Muzzleloader Black Powder 101 – Muzzleloader Safety: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nAOGFLNQ898>
- Loading and Shooting Muzzleloaders from CVA: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=533aWV9qWcA>

A Lifetime and A Legacy of Hunter Safety

Leo Lawrence, his sons and granddaughter, span three generations of service to Fish & Wildlife hunter education programs. Leo started in the mid-1960s and racked up more than 50 years volunteering in hunter education classes and with his team of fellow instructors, worked with more than 3,500 students.

As a boy back in the early 1940s, Leo Lawrence would take a .22 out to chase woodchucks from the field. But he didn't grow up in a hunting family. His route would be roundabout. Marrying into a hunting family led him into the sport. His wife, the former Helen Johnson, was born on the farm just up the hill from Leo's childhood home in Rochester. As he prefers to tell it, just like a sign from heaven, he saw a bright light glowing over the house the night she was born. Helen would often correct him, "You darn fool, that was the night our barn burned."

While truth shouldn't get in the way of a good story, Leo can rightly be congratulated for the accomplishments of his 90-plus years. Among these, are six years served in the Marines (four in Korea), coming home to work and to marry Helen and raise a family of five, and to teach, for over 50 years, more than 3,000 new Vermont hunters to be safe in the woods.

Taking up the Challenge

Leo was recruited by the Mendon Fish & Game Club to teach new classes in hunter safety back in the 1960s. Walter Patch said, "You been in the service a while, you must know a lot about guns." But his experience in Korea had taught Leo the military was more interested in teaching combat use rather than firearm safety.

"We had guys go over walls with loaded rifles and grab on guns as a way to pull them over with the barrel aimed right at them, even grabbing by the bayonet and those things mean business." He'd had a carbine in a rifle explode in his hands, knocking Leo out and killing the marine next to him. Back in Vermont, he agreed to help with the new safety classes and to impart a healthy appreciation for careful firearms handling.

In the 1960s and early 70s, most of the kids Leo and his team taught came from nearby Rutland and other small cities. "Country kids by that age had been out with their parents, with their fathers, older brothers and so forth they all had some experience hunting and with rifles. The ones we saw didn't have that experience and were from city areas. They were ones that wanted to shoot but their parents wouldn't let them and didn't know anything about it, so they sent them to our course."

In 1974, between 800 or 900 students were certified through Mendon Fish and Game. That was one-third of the state's entire class of hunter safety graduates. Once the law changed and hunter education became mandatory in 1975, Mendon F&G's classes became even more popular. "At one point we only had three instructors going at one time and we had 90-plus kids show up for one class! We had a gate on our property and we went out and shut it so no more cars could come up."

Mendon's 3-person team evolved over the years with one teaching first aid, one hunter safety and Leo taking on (for more than 40 years) the rifle handling and shooting.

A Passion for Record Keeping

Keeping track of all these students was a monumental effort. When Leo first started teaching, instructors were given a long roster list but no way to keep



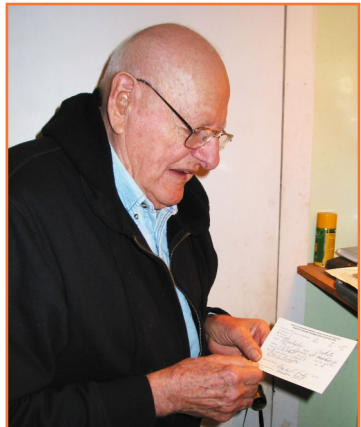
Leo shares with Scott Darling photos from his Korean War service. The carbine he is holding in the photo exploded, killing the soldier next to Leo and injuring Leo and another soldier.

track of individual students. Leo devised a new system with an index card for each student. He'd send in one set for the state and make a duplicate, so he could have an ongoing record of all of Mendon's students.

"I have one for every student that we taught—all 3,579 students over 50 years."

He's found those cards have come in handy over the years, remembering both the best students and, out of all those thousands, the few mostly likely to come to harm in the woods.

One student, Leo remembers, wouldn't keep quiet in class. Leo suggested he could come back when he was more mature. The boy stormed out saying, "I don't need your damned instruction. I know as much about hunting as you do." Leo wrote down exactly what had happened. Later he found out the boy was out woodchuck hunting, saw something moving in the ferns, and took a shot. His brother had been hiding behind the ferns and the rash shot wounded him fatally in the head.



Leo with one of the more than 3000 records from students he has taught in the last 50 years.

Another case was a bit harder to fathom. A boy who had started up Little Pico, had gotten halfway up the hill, and become disoriented and unsure where to go. Instead of going downhill in any direction, he went up. "He did everything the opposite of what he been taught in Hunter Safety. Took off clothes and threw them and kept going up. They found him the next morning wrapped around a tree. He'd died of hypothermia. I went back to the cards and he was a real high-scoring, a good student, but he'd gotten into drugs at one time or another and was not himself."

Three Generations of Hunter Education

One of only a handful of life members at Mendon Fish & Game, Leo is quick to note he's only the second oldest (the most senior is 102). Leo stepped away from actively teaching the shooting portion of hunter education five or so years ago, ceding to the next generation, who he maintains is far better at it than he was.

The echoes of his time as an instructor for Vermont Fish & Wildlife, however have resounded in more than just the Mendon clubhouse. All four of his sons grew up to be instructors at one time or another. His oldest son Douglas became a Vermont game warden [1981-2009] and his youngest son, Kevin has been HE instructor since 1984; bow since 1982; F&W board member 2013-2019. Doug and Kevin (and Kevin's wife Melanie) also worked at Buck Lake Conservation Camp, as has granddaughter Beth at Kehoe.



Leo holds a target he shot in the summer of 2017 at age 89.

Although Leo hasn't been up to the Rochester deer camp that his wife's family owned in a while, his memories of that first trip still resonate. Before being a deer camp, the old building was Bingo Hill School, where Leo had been a first grader all those years ago. "When it was a schoolhouse, it had these marks on the floors where the old seats stood. First time I went in there as a deer camp, I went right over and found the ring on the floor where I was sitting in first grade."

Leo is still making the mark as an incredible shot, capable of hitting 9s while target shooting with a 30-06 this past summer. And the generations of hunters he's trained are keeping the woods ringing in the fall, returning safely with their bucks to a whole new generation of awed Vermont kids.

"I'm very proud. I have a photo of all four sons and me and Helen—because she helped me a lot with the paperwork—and my son-in-law and along with leaders from Fish and Wildlife in charge of Hunter Safety at the time. It was a really proud moment."

—Susan Warner

Wild Game Recipes

Fall harvest calls for delicious meals!

Venison Chili

Ingredients:

2 pounds venison, cubed or ground
1/4 cup flour (of your choice)
2 tablespoons olive oil
1 can diced tomatoes in green chilis
1/2 cup chicken broth
1 tablespoon chili powder
2 teaspoons cumin
1 teaspoon sea salt
1 can white kidney beans
1 can white mountain beans
1 can black beans
1 medium green bell pepper
7 mini heirloom tomatoes
three cheese blend, shredded



Preparation:

Cut venison into 1/2 inch – 1 inch cubes and rinse thoroughly. Put the flour on a plate and roll the meat around in the flour in batches coating it. In a large chili pot, brown the meat in the olive oil until fully cooked. Add tomatoes, chicken broth, salt, cumin and chili powder. Cover the pan and cook on low heat for 1 hour, stirring occasionally. Add all of the beans, drained and diced green pepper to the chili. Cut the tomatoes in halves or quarters, depending on the size of the tomato and add to the chili. Cook covered on low for a half hour more or until done, stirring occasionally. Serve with a small handful of cheese to garnish. Yum!

Bacon-Wrapped Turkey Breast with Wild Rice Stuffing and Cranberry-Apple Chutney

Ingredients:

1 Tablespoon butter
1 rib celery, chopped
1 large shallot chopped
salt and pepper
6oz package wild rice mix
1/4 cup dried cranberries
1/2 cup low fat sour cream
3/4lb boneless turkey breast tenderloins
salt & pepper
6 slices bacon
For the Cranberry-Apple Chutney:
14oz can whole-berry cranberry sauce
1 Granny Smith apple, chopped



1 large shallot chopped
1/4 cup apple cider vinegar
1/4 teaspoon red chili pepper flakes
1/4 teaspoon garam masala
1" knob fresh ginger, peeled
Juice of 1 orange

Preparation:

For the Cranberry-Apple Chutney:

Combine all ingredients in a saucepan then bring to a boil. Cover and simmer for 30 minutes, stirring every so often. Remove ginger then cool slightly, and then chill completely in the refrigerator. *Can be done 2-3 days ahead of time.*

Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Melt butter in a medium-sized saucepan over medium heat. Add celery and shallot then season with salt and pepper and sauté until tender. Add wild rice mix, including amount of water called for on package, then cover, reduce heat and cook according to package directions. Stir in dried cranberries and sour cream then set aside to cool slightly.

Using a sharp knife, butterfly turkey breast by slicing horizontally across the length of the breast, being careful not to cut all the way through. Open like a book then place a piece of plastic wrap on top and pound until 1/2" thick. Season turkey with salt and pepper then scoop 1 cup wild rice mixture onto one half of the turkey, and then spread leaving 1/2" clear on the sides. Fold the other half over.

Lay bacon on baking sheet then place stuffed turkey breast on top and fold bacon slices over, trimming any overlapping pieces. Bake for 40 minutes, or until the internal temperature reaches 160 degrees, finishing with a few minutes under the broiler if bacon needs to crisp up a little bit. Let turkey rest for 10 minutes then slice and serve with Cranberry-Apple Chutney.

Contact Us!

This is YOUR newsletter!
Have a photo or story you'd like to share?
E-mail us with your suggestions, stories, pictures or other input!

Alison Thomas
Education Manager
E-mail: Alison.Thomas@Vermont.gov
Cell: 802-371-9975

John Pellegrini
Training Coordinator
E-mail: John.Pellegrini@Vermont.gov
Cell: 802-272-2909

Tess Prestage
Hunter Ed & Licensing Admin
E-mail: Tess.Prestage@Vermont.gov
Main Office: 802-828-1193

Nicole Meier
Information & Education Specialist
E-mail: Nicole.Meier@Vermont.gov
Cell: 802-318-1347

Nate Lafont
Hunter Education Specialist
E-mail: Nathan.Lafont@Vermont.gov
Main Office: 802-828-1193

Hunter Education All Staff
E-mail: HunterEducation@Vermont.gov
Main Office: 802-828-1193
Address: 1 National Life Dr, Dewey
Bldg, Montpelier VT 05620

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