

Gunning for tradition

Event hopes to keep rifle skills in focus

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On a grassy patch of land near Newburgh, a group of riflemen dropped to the ground and aimed their weapons at a target some 25 yards away.

Crouched side-by-side in a line, they stared straight ahead and waited for the order.

"Fire!" an instructor yelled.

Bullets zipped through the air, unleashing a series of pops like a finale at a fireworks show.

The scene, some at the Red Brush Rifle Range will say, is reminiscent of the days when America's founding fathers gathered to practice their marksmanship, a skill that would come in handy during the Revolutionary War.

But, in many families today, it's a skill that isn't passed down to future generations, said Jack Dailey of The Revolutionary War Veterans Association.

But Dailey hopes to reverse that trend through a series of programs he calls the Johnny Appleseed Tour. Dailey and several other rifle trainers began touring the country in February, giving two-day workshops on basic rifle skills and techniques.

The tour came to the Red Brush Rifle Range on Saturday, where more than 120 area riflemen participated. The tour will continue there today.

Dailey hopes the participants will return home and pass along the skills they learned, "planting seeds" for future generations.

Guns have received a bad rap in the mass media, and stories of the Revolutionary War aren't discussed as much in today's history classes, Dailey said.

"We've had several generations of good times," he said. "We have all the modern distractions of computers, computer games, TV, satellite TV, all this stuff. People aren't exposed to it. There's a rich history there."

The program was sponsored by the 2nd Amendment Patriots of Southwestern Indiana. Dailey is "trying to get the young people involved so we don't lose this art and tradition," group leader Jim Tomes said.

Support for the Second Amendment is strong in Indiana, Tomes said. The turnout for Saturday's program was by far the largest of any stop on the tour, he added.

Tomes and Dailey were encouraged to see people such as Joe Holbrook, a 14-year-old from Mount Vernon, Ind., who came with his grandfather, Tom Holbrook.

The younger Holbrook learned how to shoot a BB gun when he was 5 years old. His grandfather took him into the back yard and lined up empty soda cans as targets.

Five years later, Holbrook got his first rifle, a .22. He's been hunting with his grandfather ever since. Asked what he enjoys about shooting, Holbrook answered without hesitation, "Everything."



BOB GWALTNEY / Courier & Press

ABOVE: From a prone position, over 100 men and women take aim as they work on their marksmanship this weekend at the Red Brush Rifle Range in Warrick County. The two day event is part of Project "Appleseed" a nation wide effort to improve the rifle skills of Americans under the direction of the Revolutionary War Veterans Association and organized locally by the 2nd Amendment Patriots.