

Targeting marksmanship, American heritage

Appleseed Project holds rifle clinic

By Mike Harris

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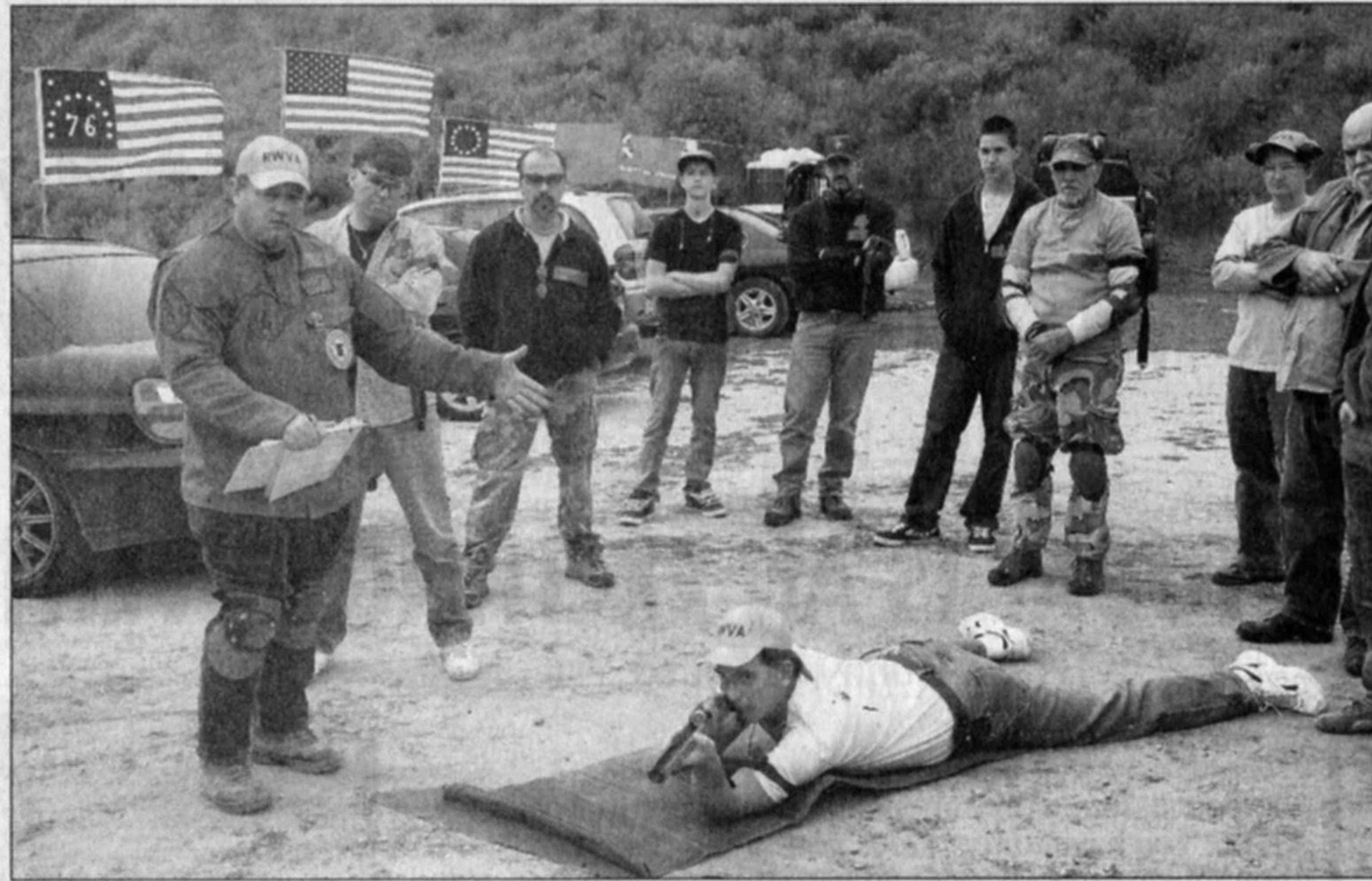
At a remote Piru shooting range Saturday, a group called the Appleseed Project held a hands-on clinic on that part of American heritage it holds most dear: how to become a "true rifleman."

Under the watchful eyes of instructors at the first day of the two-day seminar at Wes Thompson's Piru Rifle Range, about 25 students in prone positions fired their rifles at paper targets yards off in the distance. After the shots rang out and the range was deemed safe, the students examined the targets and were given further instructions on how to improve their marksmanship.

The clinic, which also covers shooting from the standing and sitting positions, was scheduled to start again today at 8:30 a.m. Admission is \$45, plus a \$10 range fee. The range is at 6700 Holser Canyon Road.

Bob Zio, the Appleseed Project's California coordinator, said the group is an all-volunteer, nonprofit, apolitical organization that puts on rifle marksmanship clinics nationwide as part of the Ramseur, N.C.-based Revolutionary War Veterans Association.

"We also teach about American heritage, and the events of April 19, 1775," when the first shots were fired in the American Revolutionary War in Lexington and Concord, Mass., said Zio, a San Fernando Valley plumber.



Photos by Jacob Kriese / Special to The Star

Cameron Loessberg Jr., left, and Paul Brodnax demonstrate a proper prone shooting position Saturday. The Appleseed Project is associated with the Revolutionary War Veterans Association in North Carolina.

"At Appleseed, we feel that the Founding Fathers should not be forgotten for the sacrifices they made for our freedoms. And unfortunately, they are. They're not even taught very well in the schools anymore, so we have the opportunity to teach that here, along with rifle marksmanship."

The group's literature states that its program, named after American folk hero Johnny Appleseed, "is designed to take you from being a simple rifle owner to being a true rifleman. All throughout American history, the rifle-

man has been defined as a marksman capable of hitting a man-sized target from 500 yards away. This skill was particularly evident in the birth of our country, and was the difference in winning the Revolutionary War.

"Project Appleseed is ... charged with the goal of rebuilding a nation of riflemen."

Zio said the program began three years ago in North Carolina "and has spread across the nation like wildfire," with more than 300 clinics scheduled in various states this year.

He said California is "kind of the shining star of the program. We've had more shoots here in more locations than any other state, which says a lot about the shooting culture in California."

Instructor Cindy Martin, a nurse from Santa Paula, said she became involved with the project last March "because I wanted to help spread awareness of the price our forefathers paid for our liberties."

Another clinic attendee, Philip Perry of Simi Valley, is a native of Eng-

land, but one who has since become a U.S. citizen in large part because of Britain's strict gun control laws.

"I used to be a shooter in England, but we lost our shooting rights there," said Perry, a computer programmer. "I came over here because this is a country that respected individual rights, though that is rapidly changing. I'm here today because I believe in the Appleseed program."

On the Net:

<http://www.appleseedinfo.org>



Adam Roper takes aim with his rifle, left. The clinic was put on by members of the Appleseed Project, a nonprofit organization.



Phillip Liu, left, instructor Phil Terry and James Liu inspect marks in the target after firing rounds of ammunition.