



DEMONSTRATING SAFE SHOOTING, Dick Kelly (above), a conservation officer with the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks, showed (from left) Jude Walinder, Dakota Tate and Regan Erickson the proper “zones of fire.” Officer Kelly showed Keatra Fisher (below) how to control the muzzle of a deer rifle.

Prospective hunters test shooting skills

By JIM MERRIOTT

Thirty-three students from ages nine to 50 tested their firearms shooting accuracy at the Oberlin Gun Club last week during the annual Hunter Safety course.

Using 12-gauge shotguns, shooters big and small and of different age groups broke clay pigeons as they took aim in preparation for the upcoming upland game bird season.

“It was a whole lot of fun,” said Dayton Dreher, 11, one of the students. “I love getting the opportunity to practice my shooting and I learned a lot during the course.”

“My favorite part was learning about outdoor survival,” said Justin Gee, 12. “It doesn’t take very long for the weather to change during the winter months. Who knows; what I learned might save my life.”

The young hunters were broken

up into three groups at three stations at the gun range. They practiced loading and unloading firearms safely, walking in hunting formation and learning how to cross fences properly.

The class was taught this year by Rick Pauls, Rick Doeden, Terry Ream, Kevin Brown and Jim Merriott of Oberlin, all certified Kansas Hunter Education instructors, and Wildlife Conservation Officer Dick Kelly of Oberlin, with the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks. The instructors, with over 150 years of hunting experience among them, volunteered their time to teach the 10 1/2-hour course to 33 students between the ages of 9 and 50. The group included five girls, 23 boys, three mothers and a couple of dads.

They tried to show the students how to hunt safely, be a sportsman,

be ethical, leave the environment in better shape than when they entered it, and respect landowners who allow them to hunt on their property.

Each instructor taught a section of the course.

Doeden, an avid archer, taught safety rules for bow hunting.

Pauls demonstrated the correct and safe way to handle a black-powder muzzle-loading rifle, animal calls and hunting heritage and early firearms history.

“The more informed youth hunters are, the better hunters they will be,” he said.

Merriott taught the importance of preparing for a hunt, hunting skills, water safety and survival techniques, including prevention of hypothermia if caught in foul weather.

Kelly explained state hunting laws, field safety and the principles

of wildlife habitat and management.

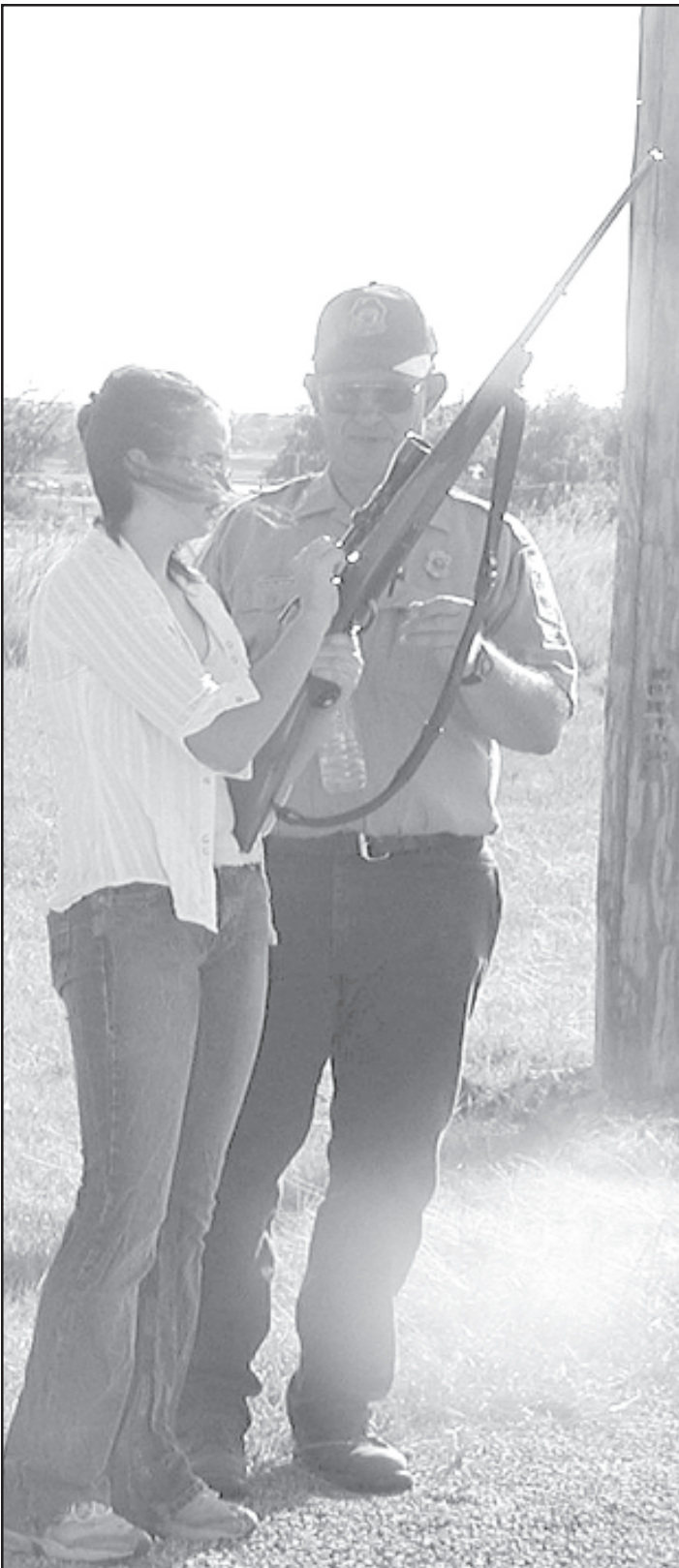
“Our objective is to teach the youth in our area respect for landowners and inform them about firearm safety and hunting laws,” he said.

Brown and Ream covered hunter responsibility, firearm handling and safety while using shotguns, rifles and handguns, proper use of ammunition, firearm care, marksmanship and shooting fundamentals.

The course was sponsored by the Decatur County emergency medical technicians, the Oberlin Gun Club, Dale’s Fish ‘n’ Fun, Custom Trophy and Engraving, Sappa Valley Construction and the Oberlin Chapter of Pheasants Forever.

Pheasants Forever donated blaze-orange ball caps from its youth program money.

“It was a great turnout this year,” said Doeden. “This is our way of paying back to the sport we love.”



OFFICER DICK KELLY took a few minutes to cover wildlife habitat and management practices during the hunter education course held last week at the Oberlin Gun Club range.