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Girls with Guns: 'I will shoot you'

Girls and Their Guns course teaches women how to fire a gun safely on themselves

Nicole Frey
August 24, 2006

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MINTURN - "Stop! I have a gun. Leave my house," shouted the 11-year-old girl.

And with the words barely out of her mouth, Noel Smith opened fire.

Any intruder would be dead on his back, but this was just practice. Noel, along with seven other women, was practicing her marksmanship at a session of Girls and Their Guns, a summer-long program that teaches women how to shoot and about gun safety.

On the crisp Saturday morning at the Minturn firing range, shots echoed across the valley leaving the smell of gunpowder lingering in the air.

Noel cocked her head, squinted her eyes, placed one leg in front of the other and squeezed the trigger. Five women lined up next to her in variations of the same stance.

"I've always wanted to know what guns were like and how they were used," said Noel, who's been shooting for nearly two years and learned of the program from her karate teacher, Mathew Bayley, who teaches the gun class. "When I heard he was doing this, I really wanted to try it ... I've been stuck to it ever since."

Easing into firearms

But not everyone was as gung-ho about shooting as Noel, who reined her dad and 10-year-old sister, Celia, into the sport.

Get your gun

What: Individuals or teams of two to four women will receive five, two-hour shooting classes. The classes cover basic handgun safety and shooting techniques for the home and outdoors.

When: Lessons can be scheduled for 8 a.m. to 1 p.m., Monday through Saturday.

Noel Smith, 11, left, Nancy Jones Broder, center, and Rebecca Bayley, right, take aim. **Kathy Lippert/Vail Daily**



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When Nancy Jones-Broder's husband suggested they spend a couple years ago, Jones-Broder was less than thrilled a

"I didn't like guns," she said. "I was afraid of them."

Jones-Broder recalled visiting an indoor shooting range

"I cried the whole time," she said.

Girls and Their Guns has helped foster a strong bond b

Grand Junction Free Press

Eagle Valley Enterprise

Leadville Chronicle

Post Independent

Snowmass Sun

Summit Daily

The Vail Trail

Valley Journal

Where: The Minturn or Gypsum shooting ranges.
Cost: \$500.

For more information, call Mathew Bayley 949-8121 or visit ontargetatvail.com.

Jones-Broder and her .45. She said she now enjoys the hitting the target.

“I teach uncomfortable subjects in a way that makes the comfortable,” Bayley said. “Shooting is just one aspect empowerment. Firearms are a very self-empowering se tool.”

But he knows not everybody is as encouraging about guns as he is. “I’m comfortable with opposed to firearms, that’s fine,” Bayley said.

“But if you’re trying to protect your family, a firearm is the best way to do it,” he said. “A last-resort tool, but if and when you need it, you really need it.”

‘A lot of guns’

Kim Sheridan hadn’t picked up a gun in years but was relieved she kept one at home when into her Wildridge home four years ago.



Women practice shooting as part of the Girls and Their Guns course taught by instructor Mathew Bayley at the firing range in Minturn.
Kathy Lippert/Vail Daily

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“I was screaming at him to get out of my house, ‘I have will shoot you,’” she said.

The man left and was later picked up by police, and SI .38 Special away again until last Saturday.

“There are just some things happening in the community me aware that I need to be competent with my gun,” s Antonio native who began using firearms when she was

As a single mother, Sheridan said the gun gives her a security.

“And it’s a great sport, a great adrenaline rush,” she said

Diana McSpadden said being comfortable with a gun in today’s violent world.

“You never know when you’re going to need to know how to get bullets out of a gun or p McSpadden, a novice markswoman, who only started shooting two months ago. “There are in the world.”

Guns for life

Whether for recreation or to feel safer at night, Bayley said shooting is all about taking co



Denise Grabowski loads her gun.
Kathy Lippert/Vail Daily

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“Guns are a reality of life,” he said.

Watching his daughter load her gun, Noel’s dad, Paul happy his eldest daughter found a hobby that’s not only teaches life lessons, he said.

“Guns are very misunderstood,” he said. “This is teaching deal with peer pressure, teaching her safety skills. She to know what to do when guns come out.”

When the ladies are done with the program, they’ll receive from the National Rifle Association for basic handgun prerequisite for applying for a concealed firearms permit

They’ll also get together for a final potluck and award

_____ there's a good chance many will see each other again.

“There's a camaraderie between people who do things to empower themselves,” Bayley said.

Staff Writer Nicole Frey can be reached at 748-2927 or nfrey@vaildaily.com.

Vail, Colorado

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