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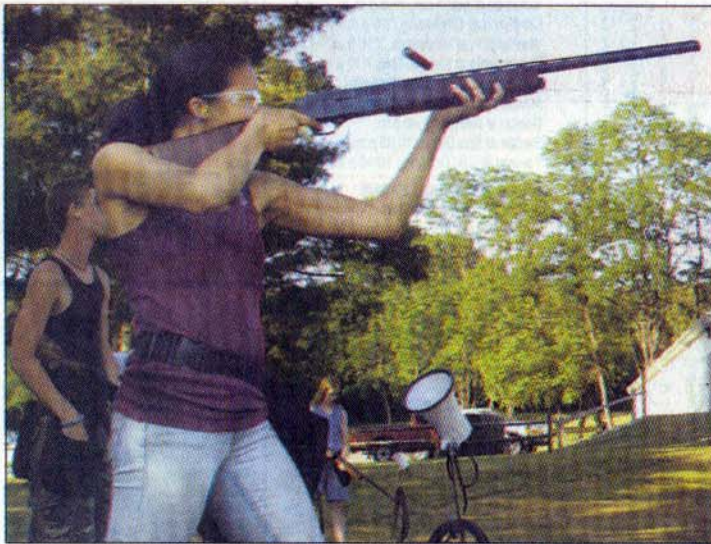
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Program aims to teach youngsters



JOHN PAVONCELLO — *The York Dispatch*

Dallastown's Kelley Seeler, 15, takes her turn while practicing at the Jefferson Sportsmen's Association. Seeler is a member of the Mason-Dixon Clay Busters (MDCB) trap team, a sports development program open to youngsters in sixth through 12th grades. The team competes in the state meet next week.

For some reason, we always remember the first time we do something. First loves. The first time driving a car. Our first beer.

They're all engraved deep into the trenches of our memories.

One of my fondest memories of the outdoors was the first time I shot a gun. It was at a local sporting clay range. For a young boy, it was a rite of passage. Somehow, when I pulled that trigger, I instantly transitioned from a boy to a man. At least in my young mind.

One local shooter, Roger Beardsley, is giving that very same special opportunity to dozens of young men and women. He's the head coach of the Mason-Dixon Clay Busters (MDCB) trap



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team, a sports development program open to youngsters in sixth through 12th grades.

"They are outside," says Beardsley. "They are doing something that is a lifetime sport that they will enjoy with their families forever."

Trapshooting, in which participants shoot at flying

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Aims to teach youngsters

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clay targets, is a fantastic sport for young shooters because it teaches a wide range of skills. Not only do the participants learn about gun handling and safety, but they also learn the importance of teamwork and individual hard work.

On Monday, the 11-person MDCB team will head to Elysburg for the state trapshooting championship. To bring home a trophy, the youngsters will have to be at the top of their game. It will take months of individual

hard work and plenty of determination to find success against 175 other eager competitors.

In today's society, guns have an undeserved bad reputation. When taught how to be handled properly and treated responsibly, a shotgun can be a great tool in a young person's life.

Thanks to Beardsley and his MDCB team, trapshooting offers the area's students a way to experience guns and the world that surrounds shooting in a positive light. Most importantly, it gives them an opportunity to get outside and away from the shallow allure of television and video games.

The MDCB operates under a national organization

called the Scholastic Clay Target Program, which plans to have more than 10,000 students enrolled in shooting programs by next year. It's a wonderful program that enhances the lives of everybody involved.

Beardsley and all of the nation's coaches and team organizers must be applauded. Not only are they doing a service to countless young men and women, they're also helping to change society's misaligned stance on guns.

Across the nation, young people are stepping away from hunting and other shooting sports. We're losing a great national heritage. But thanks to programs like this one, we know the tradition will carry on, for at least

a few more lifetimes. The more we get our youngsters outdoors, the better this nation will be.

The MDCB is co-sponsored by the York Chapter of the Izaak Walton League of America and the Jefferson Sportsmen's Association. Together, the sponsors provide everything needed for a truly life-changing program.

Beardsley and his team are always searching for new participants, coaches and sponsors. To learn more about this vital program, call Beardsley at 235-0743.

Andy Snyder writes about the outdoors for *The York Dispatch*. He can be reached at sports@yorkdispatch.com. Read his blog, "The Outdoors Insider," at yorkdispatch.com/blogzone.