



Hunter Information & Training Program News

Spring 2025

Coordinator's Corner-Ginamaria Smith

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DID YOU KNOW?

Only 16 states require students to complete a live fire shooting component during the field day in order to obtain their hunter education certification.

Picture: Kodiak hunter ed students

It's been a busy spring for the HIT Program and all signs indicate that we've got lots of classes and events planned to keep us busy for the upcoming summer too!



Kirk Lingofelt retired at the end of April after being an integral part of the HIT Program for 26 years. In his early years, Kirk built the shotgun ranges at the Rabbit Creek Shooting Park, traveled around the state teaching Alaskans firearm safety and outdoor recreation skills out of the mobile trailer, and was instrumental in developing the muzzleloader ed certification course. Kirk was the Statewide Hunter Education Coordinator since 2016, and during this time period, he trained over 400 new volunteer instructors. We will keep you updated on the recruitment of the position In the meantime, if you need help setting up a class or replacing equipment, please call or email me.



The Steering Group met at the end of February in Anchorage. One of the discussion items was updating the current student surveys and also surveying instructors after each class. The Steering Group and HIT Program staff have spent the last few months updating and designing these surveys.

1. New Student Survey: There will be a single survey for all certification courses. A copy of the new survey is included with this newsletter. A PDF has been put on the Instructor Webpage as a resource and regional coordinators are updating all paperwork boxes and cabinets. Student surveys are still optional for students to fill out.

2. Instructor Feedback Survey: Regional coordinators will email instructors a Survey Monkey link after each field day to obtain feedback. The surveys will be confidential and optional. The questions are:

- Was there enough paperwork and was the equipment in good working order?
- During the field day, were there any actions or observations (positive or negative) that you'd like to share about your co-instructors?
- During the field day, were there any actions or observations (positive or negative) that you'd like to share about your students?
- Were the facilities adequate for you to conduct the field day? How were your interactions with the facility staff/board members?
- Do you have any additional information or comments that you'd like to share with HIT Program staff?

2024 Instructor of the Year Awards

Volunteer instructors are the backbone of the HIT Program. As a group, volunteer instructors possess a vast wealth of information which has proven to be invaluable in passing on the knowledge and skills of the outdoors. The HIT Program would like to recognize the following volunteer instructors for making a significant contribution to the HIT Program and considerably advancing the cause of safe/ethical hunting.

Hunter Education Instructor of the Year: Ralf Lysdahl (Wasilla)

Ralf became an active instructor in 2017. He has taught 31 classes for 412 students and 6 of those classes were in 2024. He is always trying to recruit more volunteer instructors from his classes and co-workers.



Outstanding Educator of the Year: Sarah Stallone (Anchorage)

Sarah taught 2 hunter ed and 8 B.O.W. classes in 2024. She's been a volunteer instructor since 2010 and is always willing to share her knowledge of firearms and optics with students.



Lifetime Achievement Award: Larry Boyle (Anchorage)

Larry started teaching hunter ed in 1996 in Dutch Harbor, then Fairbanks for a few years, and the majority of his instructing has been done in Anchorage. He has taught 73 hunter ed classes certifying 1,128 students.



Apprentice Instructor of the Year: Rylee Lemons (Ninilchik)

Rylee was certified as a hunter ed instructor in October of 2023. In 2024 she taught 3 classes



certifying 30 students. Co-instructors love how organized Rylee is when helping with class paperwork and she is always encouraging others to become instructors.

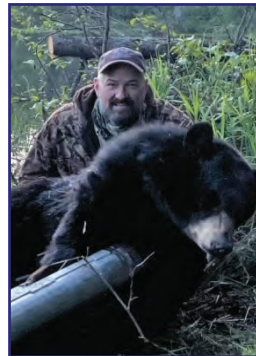


Rookie of the Year Award: Heather Thomas (Anchorage)

Heather got certified as a hunter ed and bowhunter ed instructor in October of 2023. She proceeded to teach 2 classes that year and 10 in 2024! Heather's enthusiasm for the HIT Program and firearm safety is infectious for her co-instructors and students.

Legacy Award: Greg Jacobs (Palmer) & Randy Pitney (Fairbanks)

The Legacy Award recognizes "a current or past instructor who has left a lasting legacy in their community, passed on their hunting/firearms knowledge, and contributed to the success of the HIT Program for many years. They exemplify the spirit of the HIT Program and share it with fellow instructors and the students."



Greg has been an instructor since 2003. He has taught 57 bowhunter ed classes and 24 hunter ed classes which certified 1,189 students. Greg loves talking to everyone about the HIT Program and our responsibilities as hunters.

Randy has taught hunter ed classes, B.O.W. classes, and NRA Range Safety Officer classes in the Fairbanks area since 1991 (according to our records!). He was on the Steering Group from 2004-2007, and enjoys helping with the school hunter ed field days.



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Welcome to Our New Volunteer Instructors

We wish to extend a warm welcome to all new volunteer instructors who have joined us since the publication of our last newsletter. Congratulations and welcome aboard!

Hunter Education:

Akiachak: Daniel Phillip

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Anchorage: Amor Alip, Paul Frankland, Cary Myler, Wade Schock

Brevig Mission: Adriana Barr, Mark Torrechiva

Copper Center: Georgia Jackson, Esa Mayo-Pitts

Cordova: Kyle King, Daniel Schmalzer

Delta Junction: Samuel Owens

Eagle River: Stephen Hair, Makena Mauro, David May Ester: Judson Hack

Fairbanks: Tommy Baxter II, Arne Erickson, Jolene McGinty, Darcie Neary, Andrea Nield, Leah Weaver

Galena: Ashley Kramer, Emily Lester

Gambell: Jhaymarth Ortiz, Nicholas Riddick

Glennallen: Benjamin Dolgner, Scott Somers

Golovin: Frank Amaktoolik

Gustavus: Leland Barker, Trey Schneider

Haines: Jacques Turcotte

Healy: Samuel Kimmel

Juneau: Samuel Fisher, Michael Kelly, Mark Kennard, Nicholas Orr, Ryan Peyton

Kenai: Mindy Lawrence

Ketchikan: Mark Williamson

Kiana: Ronnie Hawley, David Youngblood

Klawock: Patrick Dodd, Melissa Dougherty

Klukwan: Jennifer Marschke

Kodiak: Hunter Blair, Jordan Fogle, Kimberley Knight

McGrath: Christopher Shelborne

Metlakatla: William Bolton, Joseph Henry, Chelsea Martinez, Drew Yliniemi, Nicholas Yliniemi

Minto: Arland Dick

Nome: Demetrios Pantelis

North Pole: Jeremy Bingham, Jarrett Roethke, Miles Stutes

Saint Michael: Donald Barr

Savoonga: Melissa Schuyler-Carlson

Selawik: Brad Schott

Shishmaref: Roben Itchoak

Sitka: Brian Dirks, Keri Gray, Jarred Rivera

Slana: Dave Rojeck

Soldotna: Duncan Burns, Lana Davenport, Kevin Moos

Thorne Bay: Philip Lusted, Jay Mihal, Donna Nixon

Tuluksak: Aaron Litzler

Unalakleet: Eric Leusch

Wasilla: Juan Olson, Vanessa Rodgers

White Mountain: Jack Adams

Willow: Andrew Giddens

Bowhunter Education:

Anchorage: Gary Colbath, Sean Eckert, Ashley Fregly, John Leiter, Kyle Metcalf

Eielson Air Force Base: Dylan Stefani, Heidi Stefani

Fairbanks: Clayton Merrill

Juneau: Michael Kelly

Kenai: Christopher Aeschliman

Kodiak: Joshua Boyle, Neil Moomey, Michael Zweng

Muzzleloader Education:

Anchorage: Cary Myler

Eagle River: Stephen Hair

Wasilla: Bill Kubik

Crossbow Education:

Anchorage: Jason Amaro

Eagle River: Ben Matthews

Please encourage students, family members, and friends to fill out the instructor application if you think they would be a great addition to the HIT Program. The next instructor trainings will be held this fall!



IHEA Instructor Resource Site
<https://www.ihea-usa.org/>
<https://www.expertvoice.com/ihea/>
HIT Program Site
www.huntereducation.alaska.gov



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Instructor Notes

Above & Beyond Recipients



We'd like to recognize the following instructors for going "above and beyond" this winter. Thanks to the Alaska Wild Sheep Foundation for providing Cabela's gift certificates to help us recognize our Above & Beyond recipients. We'll continue to recognize 1-4 extraordinary volunteer instructors each quarter, so please keep an eye

out for co-instructors who go "above and beyond" in the next few months and send HIT Program staff an email.

Jason Amaro (Eagle River)



Jason Amaro got certified as an Alaskan hunter ed instructor in October 2024. Prior to moving to Alaska he taught in New Mexico and he is also a committee member of the IHEA-USA Instructor Advisory Committee. This spring he has already taught 8 hunter ed classes and is always willing to step in to instruct if an additional instructor is needed.

Rich Graham (Palmer)

Rich Graham has already instructed 5 hunter ed and 1 bowhunter ed classes this year. Two of these classes were in conjunction with new hunter and bowhunter ed instructor trainings and Rich was able to share his knowledge and experience with new instructors.



Kelsey Snell (Fairbanks)

Kelsey has become a go-to instructor in the Fairbanks area in 2025! He taught 4 of the 8 public hunter ed field days offered which certified 67 students. His enthusiasm for instructing is evident and feedback from students shows they enjoy the knowledge that he shares.



Rick Sterling (Fairbanks)

Rick is a long-time, very active instructor in the Fairbanks area. This year he's already taught 8 hunter ed classes, including helping out with a school field day and a new hunter ed instructor training.

HIT Program Staff Contact Information

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Arianne Asay 267-2187

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Dani Easterling
459-7242

Juneau:

Mike Kelly 465-4345
Dan Palicka 586-4101



**Instructors Bruce
Bowler, Ryan Scott, &
Dan Hubert traveled to
Yakutat in May to certify
25 students!**