

The right to bear arms

Ladies take aim during Women on Target event

By Sloan Brewster
Senior Staff Writer

The right to bear arms was exercised by Connecticut women at Simsbury's Metacon Gun Club Saturday, June 23.

The Ninth Annual National Rifle Association Women on Target event sold out, but that was no great surprise, according to Dom Basile, because it has sold out nine years running.

The difference this year was that it sold out early, which, again, was not unanticipated, as gun ownership among those of the female persuasion has increased, he said. According to a Gallup Poll taken in October 2011, nationally, there's been a 43 percent spike in women who own guns and, on the local front, the numbers are even higher.

June Shew, who brought the event to Metacon nine years ago, likes the way it has become a family affair.

"The youngest [here] is 15, the oldest is well into her 70s," Shew said. "And we've had three generations — daughter, mother, grandmother — and it's wonderful. It really is."

When asked why she wanted families to join in the event, Shew's answer was simple.

"Because I enjoy shooting," she said.

Her weapon of choice is a 1911, which is a semi-automatic 45.

"It's too heavy to carry, so it's a good gun for the range," she explained.

Kelly Carter, who is a member of the gun club, reiterated that Women



Reporter Sloan Brewster prepares to shoot to get a first-person feel for the experience during the Women on Target event. Photo by Jennifer Senofonte

on Target draws women of all ages, and said it gives them an opportunity to get a refresher.

"We have a lot of ladies that come to this event repeatedly because of that reason," Basile concurred.

It's geared as an introduction to shooting, he explained, adding that many of the women who come are shooting "literally for the very first

time," or for the first time in a long while.

This reporter fell into the first time in a long while category. I attended Women on Target mostly because the press release promised that reporters were encouraged to shoot and, since 2007 when I received my pistol permit, much to my dismay I have not touched a gun.

Like Shew, I really enjoy shooting. I just wish I did it more often. I especially felt this way when, with the gun in my hands and the target allegedly in my sites, I repeatedly missed my aim.

Practice would help this problem, I am sure. Basile chuckled and very nicely let me off the hook for all those misses.

"You scared the target," he said. He also told me something I had heard before, something which I have not seen proof of in my own abilities.

"Women are inherently better shooters than men," he told me.

This talent, he explained, comes from women's more delicate fingers, which allow them to shoot more gently.

My problem wasn't in my fingers, though, it was in my eyes.

According to the test they gave me, my left eye is dominant. Unusual, as I am right-handed, but not unheard of; Shew is right-handed and left-eyed, too.

Whichever eye is dominant, I had a terrible time seeing the target through the sites. I experienced the same issue when I was getting my permit. I never have been able to close just one eye, and with no

patch over my right eye, I end up seeing double.

Apparently that was not my only problem. Basile mentioned I was

mit and that she enjoys shooting.

Many of the women there said the same thing.

"It's empowering," said Jamie

Kathy Zirolli of Avon already has her permit, but was a newbie at the Women on Target event, which, she said, afforded her an opportunity to practice. "I wanted to get confident, that's a dangerous weapon," she said. "The feeling I get when I hit my target: what a rush." But she started shooting out of principle. "From my constitutional right," she said. "Nobody should take that away, it's what this country is founded on."

aiming too low as well, pointing the barrel down just a bit. All of these details came back to me later when I was interviewing four women who had come together for the event.

The conversation turned to seeing people shooting on television and in the movies.

"What you see in the movies is not realistic," said Lola Carter of Farmington.

Lauren Gardner, also from Farmington, the youngest in the foursome, agreed. She commented on how unrealistic it is when characters, male or female, pick up guns and, shooting for the very first time, make their target. That would never actually happen, she insisted.

Lauren, who brought her mother, Yvonne Gardner, to the event, said she "definitely" plans to get her per-

Cohen of Simsbury, who was with Carter and the Gardners. "You feel like you've accomplished something."

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Once a month, on the fourth Saturday, Metacon is open to non-members for an open shoot, from 6 to 10 p.m.

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