

# VERMONT'S WOMEN ON TARGET

By Catherine Barsanti  
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**A NEW BUZZ IN VERMONT** has ladies rushing to dress up and go out—to the range! The craze stems from the NRA's Women On Target (WOT) program, which gives women the opportunity to learn about firearms and firearm safety and to develop beneficial shooting skills for both sporting and self protection that will last a lifetime.

One community that has seen a remarkable spike in interest is in the small town of Barre, Vt., where Cyndy Jones introduced the program to the area in 2011. A trustee on the Barre Fish & Game Club board, Jones decided to bring the program to Barre when she noticed the lack of other female shooters at the club. That's all changing now, with the club's WOT program having just experienced their most popular year yet.

"I started the program because I was one of the few women shooting at the club, and I'm the only woman trustee of the club," Jones notes. "So, I threw out the idea to do an introduction handgun class for the women." The goals and format of the WOT program tailor to just this type of situation.

In the few years of hosting the event, Jones has seen a steady increase in the number of women who want to participate and get involved, despite relatively small advertising efforts. "I put up a big poster board with pictures from the previous [seminars] along with a signup sheet at the local *Friends of NRA* banquet, and I get anywhere from 10-20 names," Jones explains about her simple yet effective advertising. "[Just] with word of mouth I sometimes have to turn women away, but I'll always place them at the top of the list for the next year's seminar."

Jones handpicks the instructors for the program from her fellow trustees and other men who volunteer to help with the training. Typically she hosts one handgun class and one shotgun class each year, but with the rise in the program's popularity, she extended the program to include two

handgun classes this summer. "The women just absolutely love the classes. I could probably do one a month and have them be full," says Jones. "A lot of women just want to be able to safely handle a handgun for home security, for target and for recreational use as well." While the skills developed by this training program are the stated goal, its value can truly be seen in the overall effect it has on the participants. Jones expresses, "The excitement and confidence that these classes give the women attending is amazing."

Evan Hughes, Vice President of Vermont Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs, stated that in 2005 when the club began applying for grants that two out of the seven went to WOT programs. Now, thanks to efforts like Jones' in Barre, the program has grown throughout the state as a whole. Ten out of the sixteen grants administered by the VTFSC now go to WOT.

"The clubs can't conduct enough of them to meet the demand," says Hughes. "The demand for student seats exceeds the capacity for what instructors can handle in their class. So we're trying to run enough of them to meet the demands, and every year they just keep growing and growing." With the rising popularity and empowering nature of the Women On Target program, the women of Vermont are not to be messed with! ■

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