

# Target Talk

TEXAS HUNTER EDUCATION NEWS



Quarterly Newsletter

Fall Issue 2017

No. 159

*Mission: To manage and conserve the natural and cultural resources of Texas and to provide hunting, fishing and outdoor recreation opportunities for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations.*

## Coordinator's Column



Welcome back to the quarterly publication of Target Talk! We plan to highlight yearly accomplishments while keeping a "Bi-Weekly News" (blog) going online for more current information.

Thanks, again, for entrusting in me the responsibilities of the Texas Hunter Education program – among the finest people, programs and efforts in the country **to produce safe, responsible, knowledgeable hunters and shooting sports enthusiasts** –hunter education mission!

### Primary Goals for 2017/2018

- \*New\* Online Registration System
- Revised Hunter Ed. Inst. Manual
- 'Hunting 101' Program/Materials
- Annual Conference/THEIA Partnership
- R3 – Bolstered Recruitment, Retention & Reactivation Efforts & Partnerships
- New Outreach & Diversity Strategies

## 2016/2017 TX Hunter Education Annual Instructor Conferences

Annual Hunter Education Instructor conferences were held in April of 2016 and 2017, respectively, and were sponsored by your **Texas Hunter Education Instructor's Association (THEIA)** – a real plus when it comes to supporting you in your local and statewide efforts. Please JOIN!



## Award Winners Honored in April 2016

Many instructors were honored during the 2016 conference held in Houston.



**2015 VOLUNTEER INSTRUCTOR of the YEAR José Garcia, Irving**

## **VOLUNTEER INSTRUCTOR of the YEAR**

An instructor since 1993, Garcia earned his Texas Hunter Education *Hall of Fame* Award in 2009 and is credited with over 2,150 students. He is an active "huntmaster" for the Texas Youth Hunting Program ([TYHP.ORG](http://TYHP.ORG)) conducting youth hunts for over 20 years. He has participated in many outreach events including the Dallas Safari Club's "SAFETY" event held semiannually for 250 youth participating in all shooting disciplines, hunter skills and wildlife activities. (Presenter: Steve Hall – TX HE Coordinator)



## **PROFESSIONAL EDUCATOR of the Year – Cecario "CG" Guerrero, Houston**

Guerrero served over 30 years as an inner city agriculture science teacher and Texas Youth Hunting Program Regional Coordinator. Guerrero was credited with teaching over 1,000 students. He also is a top TYHP "Huntmaster" having personally led over 50 youth hunts and taken hundreds of youth on their first hunting trips - several to Colorado on Western Big Game hunts. (Presenter: Heidi Rao – SE TX HE Specialist)



## **GAME WARDEN of the Year**

### ***Jerry Gordon, TPWD GW Academy***

The former Captain at TPWD's Law Enforcement Cadet Training Center near Star, Gordon and his wife raised their daughters as young natural resource leaders and have coordinated an annual 4-H Hunter Education Camp at the Academy each year. Gordon also assisted Hunter Education staff in certifying game warden cadets and was active in hunter education workshops, training hunter education students, conducting volunteer instructor interviews and background checks, as well as presenting at the International Hunter Education Association-USA conferences in 2013 and 2014. (Presenter: Steve Hall – TX HE Coordinator)

## **2015 REGIONAL INSTRUCTORS of the Year**



### ***Ruben Rangel, Brownsville - S Texas***

Among Rangel's many accomplishments are his coordination of youth mentor hunts (waterfowl hunt for 25 youth/dove hunt for over 200 youth), assistance at HE Instructor Workshops, and his activity leading Rio Grande Valley efforts with his mobile Hunter Education trailer. He's considered the Pied Piper of the Valley! (Presenter: Brock Minton – S TX HE Specialist)







### **Joe Drobnik, Friendswood – SE Texas**

Drobnik earned the Texas Hall of Fame award in 2009 and is credited with teaching over 1,750 students. He developed curricula and gave it to the HE Program along with other teaching tips/tech. (Presenter: Heidi Rao – SE TX HE Specialist)



### **Charles Preslar, Garland – N Texas**

Preslar has since entered the Texas Hunter Education Hall of Fame in 2017 (see page 8), but was the 2015 Regional Instructor of the Year for North Texas. He has certified over 1,300 students and is active at many North Texas outreach events, including an annual event held at the TPWD's Law Enforcement Academy and Dallas Safari's SAFETY event. He also serves as president of the Texas State Rifle Association Foundation, a partner of youth shooting sports and hunter education programs. (Presenter: Monica Bickerstaff – N TX HE Specialist)



### **Hartmut Mueller, El Paso - W Texas**

Mueller (second from right) has taught over 1,000 students since 1989 and is a longtime trainer in Far West Texas. The award was presented at the TPWD Law Enforcement Office in El Paso (Presenter: Randy Spradlin – W TX HE Specialist; TPWD Game Wardens)



### **Garland Walker, Kyle – Central Texas**

Walker has since entered the Texas Hunter Education Hall of Fame in 2017 and has certified over 1850 students. The award was presented at Cabela's in Buda where Walker taught most of his courses. Walker has now moved to NE Texas and plans to continue teaching many courses, but with less students in rural East Texas. (Presenter: Steve Hall – TX HE Coordinator)

## TX HUNTER EDUCATION HALL of FAME



### ***Jeannette Hammonds, Fort Worth***

A 2015 Hall of Fame recipient, Hammonds, from Ft. Worth, accepted her award along with a bouquet of flowers at the 2016 Conference. She has taught over 3,400 students alongside her *Hall of Fame* husband, David. The Hammonds have served as longtime coordinators of the North Texas "Youth Hunter Education Challenge" and were integral in sending a team to the National NRA YHEC in the summer, 2017. (Presenter: Steve Hall – TX HE Coordinator)

### **2016 Award Winners Honored at Conference held in Abilene in April 2017**

2017 honorees joined Texas Parks and Wildlife Hunter Education Staff and Texas Hunter Education Instructor Association members at a conference hosted by Hardin Simmons University in Abilene, Texas in April 2017. Prior to the Awards Banquet, hunter education instructors attended many workshops and activities to bolster their knowledge on such topics like Chronic Wasting Disease, Hunter Ethics, Simulated Shooting, Hog 101 and the new Online Training System. AREA CHIEF Hunter Education Instructors also met to flesh out new policies and activities for 2017 and the coming years. THANKS to all for an excellent conference!



### **2016 VOLUNTEER INSTRUCTOR of the YEAR *Gilbert Graves, Jr., Corpus Christi***

Area Chief, Gilbert Graves, Jr., took up where his dad (Sr.) left off as an accomplished, dedicated Area Chief instructor in Corpus Christi. Gilbert has taught over 4,000 students and volunteers at many workshops and events. He has led the way for instruction in the Middle Coast region and in Texas (Presenter: Brock Minton – S TX HE Specialist)



### **2016 GAME WARDEN of the Year *Darla Barr, Whitesboro***

Darla has been integrally involved in teaching hunter education along with her game warden duties & law enforcement husband, Thomas, since the 1990s. Barr has taught over 500 students, over 1,000 if you add her courses with her husband. (Presenter: Monica Bickerstaff – N TX HE Specialist)





### 2016 PROFESSIONAL EDUCATOR of the Year – Robin Wheelus, *Devine*

An Agriculture Science Teacher, Wheelus accepted his award during a *Future Farmers of America* event. He has taught hunter education since 2000, and boater and bow hunter education at Devine High School. He takes students on many field trips & activities such as Youth Shooting Sports Events at the Chaparral WMA; Trapping Workshops; National Archery in Schools regional & state tournaments; 4-H shooting sports events; & many other outdoor/conservation events. He represents over 800+ Ag. Science educators teaching at the high school level. TPWD attends the Vocational Agriculture Teachers Association of Texas every summer to certify educators in the TPWD Hunter Education program. (Presenter: Brock Minton – S TX HE Specialist)



### 2016 REGIONAL INSTRUCTORS of the Year



### *Benjamin "Benny" Ham, Whitsett – S TX*

Ham accepted his award at the 2017 conference. He has assisted with numerous workshops, hunts, summer youth camps, Hunting 101s, the Lonesome Dove Fest, and a youth shooting sports event at the Chaparral WMA. He has trained over 600 students in the rural area, and will travel throughout Texas to assist HE Staff with training. (Presenter: Brock Minton – S TX HE Specialist)



### *Casimer Stawicki, Houston – SE Texas*

**Southeast TX Instructor of the Year** (photo p. 5)

Casimer or "Casey" as he is better known, an Area Chief Hunter Education Instructor from Houston, typically dreams up big ideas for the program. He is always available to SE TX Hunter Ed staff any time he is needed to teach student and instructor courses, Ethics Workshops (statewide), or outreach events such as the Houston Rodeo. Stawicki has certified 3,800 students and even taught the Ethics training seminars at the conference in which he received the award. (Presenter: Heidi Rao – SE TX HE Specialist)



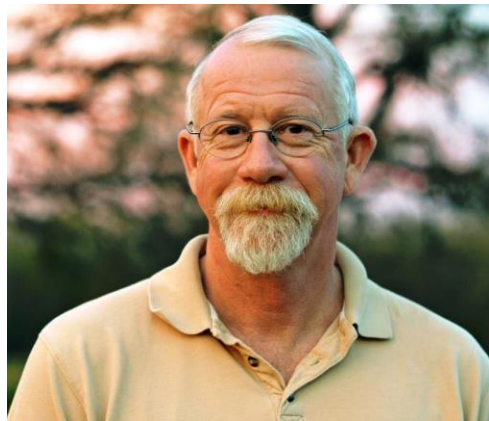
**Melanie Sturgis, Dallas – N Texas**

Sturgis, who is also part of the **Texas Training Crew**, who received the TEAM of the YEAR Award (see page 7), but gets credit for 500 of the thousands of students taught by the Training Crew. She is active at teaching summer camps including scouts and the Outdoor Texas summer camp program. She is involved in shoots, DIVAS and outdoor women instructional programs among her many outreach events and accomplishments. Like Stawicki in SE TX, she is always available to N TX staff such as helping with Ag Science Instructor training at Tarleton State University in 2017. (Presenter: Monica Bickerstaff – N TX HE Specialist)



**Rodney Sturdivant (1955-2017)**

Rodney Sturdivant, Coleman, was presented the regional award, posthumously. His widow and fellow instructor, Melissa Sturdivant, received the award bravely and humbly on Rodney's behalf. During the conference, there was a nice TPWD-produced photo montage and video produced by the Waterfowl Brigades - a tribute to honor Sturdivant for his many years of accomplishments.



Rodney's passing was a blow to the TX Hunter Education Program. He passed just a month prior to the awards ceremony. Rodney taught over 1,200 students, but his work with the Texas Brigades, waterfowl workshops and Scouts was exemplary. May he Rest in Peace! (Presenter: Randy Spradlin – W TX HE Specialist))





### ***Grace Pratt, Pflugerville – Central TX***

Area Chief Hunter Education Instructor, Grace Pratt, has taught new instructors, Hunting 101 and 476 students at Austin Commerce Park (TPWD Offices) and in her home town of Pflugerville. She has contributed greatly to the Outdoor Woman program teaching Introduction to firearms, rifle/handgun and Hunter Education.



### **HUNTER EDUCATION TEAM of the Year – Texas Training Crew (TTC)**

Lindsay Hodgdon, THEIA President and TTC Team Lead, and team member, Melanie Sturgis, accepted the newly established award on behalf of the entire TTC Team. The DFW Team teaches 20+ courses per year and is active statewide. (Presenter: Monica Bickerstaff – N TX HE Specialist)

## **TX HUNTER EDUCATION HALL of FAME**



2016 recipients included GARLAND WALKER, Kyle (4,889 points); CHARLES PRESLAR, JR., Garland, (4,702 points); MONICA SOBOTKA, Morgan Pt. Resort (4,679 points); DENNIS FOSTER, Killeen (4,565 points) and KATHY POWELL, (Honorary).



### ***Monica Sobotka, Morgan Point Resort***

Monica was certified in May 1995 after being goaded by her good friend and fellow instructor, Sherry Webb, who passed in the early 2,000s. They were both at the first Outdoor Woman workshop in 1993 and became role models as women HE instructors. With strength, Sobotka accepted the award on behalf of her longtime friend, "Sherry was such a true inspiration – I miss her dearly!" (Presenter: Steve Hall – TX HE Coordinator)



**Dennis Foster, Killeen**

2016 Recipient and Area Chief Hunter Education Instructor, Foster was certified in 2004 and teaches with fellow Area Chief, "O.D." O' Dwyer at Fort Hood, training new and veteran soldiers and other trainees as well as civilians near the military base. (Presenter: Steve Hall – TX HE Coordinator)

and with great humility, accepted the award for which he has volunteered over the last 20+ years. (Presenter: Monica Bickerstaff – N TX HE Specialist)



**Kathy Powell, Kyle - TPWD RETIRED**

Kathy Powell dropped by her "Old Digs" to accept her honorary **Hall of Fame** award and *Certificate of Retirement* signed by Executive Director, Carter Smith. Kathy spent 23 years serving hunter education instructors/students. It has been tough getting along without her, especially with the new Online Registration System.



**Charlie Preslar, Jr., Garland**

Preslar received his 2016 Hall of Fame honors while running a "Breaking Clays" charity shoot for the Texas State Rifle Association Foundation, a strong partner and contributor to Youth Shooting Sports programs in Texas including the Ag Clays shoots and Whiz Bang – a longtime TPWD mobile sporting clays program and championship. Preslar donated the gift card he received back to his charity efforts

