



Winter 2021

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

I hope this newsletter finds you all safe and healthy. As winter has set in, a new year brings in new hope and encouragement. A hope that the pandemic that we have been facing for a year in our country will subside with new advancements in science and a hope that organizations like the NWTF will continue weathering the storm as we managed to do in 2020.

I am humbled and excited to have been elected as the president of the VA NWTF, an organization that is so near and dear to my heart. I am thankful for the leadership that our outgoing president, Richard Pauley, provided us over the last four year. Virginia achieved many milestones during his tenure and I hope I am able to continue navigating our organization in a way that benefits the wild turkey and our local communities. I am confident we will continue to succeed with our mission, and we will need everyone's help to do so.

2020 was a challenging year for everyone, the NWTF notwithstanding, but it was affirmed what we've always known, the NWTF has the most faithful supporters and volunteers that anyone could ever hope for.

Our members and volunteers in Virginia played a huge part in the **survival** of our beloved organization, despite the fact that only a few "in-person" fund raising events were able to be held last year.

Our chapters and volunteers stepped in and re-invented themselves to create unique ways to fundraise in a mostly virtual environment. That effort has carried over as we kick off 2021, and as many chapters enter their traditional fund-raising season with restrictions that leave us unable to gather in a banquet venue, many are building off of the successes of virtual events from last year, to help fill gaps that were created with limited events last year.

We are hopeful that as the year continues and science progresses, that we will ultimately be able to get back to some semblance of normalcy, where we can gather for fellowship and turkey talk in a banquet venue. In the meantime, we are continuing on with our outreach missions, as that is a cornerstone of our existence, and it's what keeps our volunteers energized. Collectively, we are committed to providing scholarships for graduating seniors, providing hunting opportunities for kids, women, new, inactive, and disabled hunters, providing meals for families in need, and the many other aspects of outreach that our chapters have been promoting for years.

In summary, the mission remains unchanged: "The NWTF is dedicated to the conservation of the wild turkey and preservation of our hunting heritage.", how we succeed is up to us!

Jon Joyner
State Chapter President

VA NWTF Executive Committee

President – **Jon Joyner**

Vice President – **Ray "Bear" Davidson**

Treasurer – **Staci Longest**

Secretary – **Liz Grove**

Women in the Outdoors

Coordinator – **Julie Abel**

Wheelin' Sportsman Coordinator

– **Robin Clark**

JAKES Coordinator –

Tim Burton

Save the Hunt Coordinator –

Jeff McCambridge

NWTF STAFF

Regional Directors – **Billy Hall,**

Davy Blessing

Regional Biologist – **Cully**

McCurdy



HUNTING HERITAGE PROGRAMS



We were still able to hold several hunts this fall. We had four Wheelin members take their first deer. We were fortunate to harvest several deer on our hunts and everyone had a great time. We are currently planning spring gobbler hunts and fishing events. We look forward to moving ahead into the outdoors keeping everyone's safety and well-being in mind. Looking forward to 2021!

Jeff Hoke, President VAWS Chapter



Take a Woman Hunting – Spring Gobbler Season 2021

Each Spring Gobbler Season, the VaNWTF WITO organizes a mentored hunt to encourage more women to get involved in turkey hunting. This year will bring many changes which will include opening the entire season to be included in the event and it will also be open to any woman who wants to participate, not just paid NWTF members.

We will still have a great giveaway for those who participate. More information will be available starting in March. In the meantime, go to our Facebook page at NWTF Virginia Women in the Outdoors and keep an eye out for the launch of this exciting event!

- Julie Abel
VA NWTF WITO Coordinator



Kayleena Fike started out as a Jakes member and has been hunting deer, waterfowl and turkey since she was able to hold up a gun. As a WITO member, she used the Jakes call she received from an event she attended as a little girl to call in this Tom on her own. She said it was the only call in her vest he would respond to.



As I sit here trying to figure out how to jump start our JAKES outreach programs after 2020 and the Covid-19 pandemic, one thing I know for certain is that we cannot stand by and do nothing. If we do not step up and educate, train and mentor our youth, then our hunting heritage will suffer.

As Virginia's JAKES Coordinator, I would like to challenge each of you to mentor a youth during the Spring Youth Turkey hunting season; this mentorship will not only contribute to our legacy but is sure to benefit the mentor and mentee alike. For those who may hesitate due to Covid-19, bear in mind that maintaining distance and masks is commonplace, and even encouraged, in our sport! In order to promote mentorship, each Chapter had a chance to receive two very nice box calls as well as the opportunity to purchase more. Additionally, before youth weekend, the Virginia State Chapter will post on their Facebook page a link for youth to post their information and picture for a chance to win one of two guns that will be given away. Typically, there are about 80 youth who participate in this gun give away, so your mentee's chances of winning are pretty good!

Another way we can all contribute to the promotion of our hunting heritage is by promoting our JAKES essay contest that will be judged in December. Only 17 youth took advantage of the essay contest in 2020, but I know that many more than that went hunting and have stories to tell. Help me promote this youth essay this year to ensure each youth we know has an opportunity to tell their story.

Within these two opportunities to support our JAKES, it will cost each Chapter absolutely nothing. There is only benefit to gain! Each Chapter could mentor youth and take them hunting, which fosters greater community and encourages the next generation of hunters; the Chapter can even enter them in the Facebook contest for a chance to win a gun! Besides that, our young hunters can earn up to \$250 cash through the essay contest. These efforts are such a great way to promote our JAKES programs and encourage the hunters of tomorrow – these youth can even become young members of the NWTF.

As JAKES Coordinator, I have a goal that our Virginia JAKES can total 1600 youth for 2021 and reach 2022 youth by 2022! As an added incentive, our famous Billy Hall has challenged all of us to 2500 JAKES in 2022 – if this goal is reached, he and I will each take a pie in the face at the State Banquet. A pie in the face will be a big improvement for him!!!

I cannot be an effective JAKES Coordinator without the help of each of you; I need each Chapter to communicate to me how I may assist you with getting JAKES events started in your Chapters. No event is too small, and all ideas are encouraged! Even the smallest of events can make a big impact on a youth in your area. The most important thing, and the hardest to do, is get started – let me help! I can promise each one of you that time invested in our youth will not be regretted. Plus, it is a great way to pick up a new committee member for your Chapters!

Some of you have a history of very successful JAKES events. I would love to hear your input about what works well and what could use improvement. If you all can teach me, I will in return teach others. Together, we can help our Virginia JAKES program soar.

I cannot promise to have all the answers, but I can guarantee that if you have questions, I will work diligently to find creative solutions and help support your individual programs. I look forward to meeting each one of you that will allow me to be a part of your outreach programs. Together, with the help of the Good Lord, we can accomplish anything.

Sincerely,

Tim Burton

Virginia JAKES Coordinator, tandkburton84@yahoo.com, 540-484-3041



LOCAL CHAPTER HIGHLIGHTS

FAITHFUL CALL CHAPTER



Purchasing and distributing 300 turkeys and 35 meal boxes for Thanksgiving.

Conserve. Hunt. Share.

NWTF **VIRGINIA STATE CHAPTER**
Conserve. Hunt. Share. **NATIONAL WILD TURKEY FEDERATION**



Faithful Call Chapter delivered another 200 turkeys and 35 meal boxes at Christmas.



FRANKLIN COUNTY LONGBEARDS

Even though I have been hunting since I was big enough to follow my dad through the woods, my most meaningful hunt occurred this past November. As a member of the NWTf, I have heard many stories over the years about guides who work with our Wheelin' Sportsmen events. From simple logistics such as getting a wheelchair into a field to the more technical components like assisting in the actual hunt, these guides certainly have commitment; however, although these guides commit to assisting those with disabilities, it never occurred to me that, as mentors, the guides themselves get unexpected benefits as well. Even though I have worked with our NWTf youth for years, I didn't feel like I was qualified to mentor anyone on a hunt, especially not someone who was disabled. This all changed this past November during deer season and the 2020 pandemic. Our local chapter, the Franklin County Longbeards, set up a Wheelin' Sportsmen deer hunting event for the season, as we always do. To the disappointment of many hunters and mentors, our Wheelin' Sportsmen hunt was cancelled due to the ongoing pandemic; in order to keep spirits up, our chapter decided to refocus and plan a similar, but smaller and more manageable event given the circumstances. Rather than hosting the usual, large event, we would instead focus on the local chapter members who were disabled. Our Chapter President had signed on to guide two disabled hunters, one who is quadriplegic and one who is blind. Our Chapter President is also my dad, and I saw an opportunity to help. Even though I sat through all the meetings and discussions about the planning of the event, I hadn't planned to guide anyone. I didn't even consider myself a seasoned hunter, how could I guide someone else? I felt unqualified and too inexperienced to mentor a disabled hunter, but I knew my dad and our Wheelin' Sportsmen would benefit from an additional mentor. We decided I would guide Butch, who is blind. I truly had no idea what all this would entail. When the morning of our hunt came, we got Butch set up in a blind overlooking a large field. As we sat side by side having small talk, suddenly I saw movement in the woods. Enthusiastically, I told Butch that a deer was moving in and his eyes lit up with excitement. As I helped Butch get set up with gun in hand, the deer stepped into the field. It took some time to get his gun and camera pointed in the direction of the deer. Butch pulls the trigger! Immediately he starts asking, "Did I get it?!" As the smoke cleared, I could see that Butch had dropped the deer in its tracks, a perfect shot at over 200 yards! I looked over at Butch, who was anxiously awaiting my answer, and happily tell him that he got the deer! As we begin celebrating, I realize that I couldn't remember a time when I was this excited to harvest a deer myself. Butch may not be able to see through his eyes, yet somehow, he was able to help me see through them. The excitement and anticipation I was able to witness through Butch forever changed my perspective on hunting. The story doesn't end here, though! Around the time Butch and I calm down from the excitement, I see another deer had stepped out in the field! I quickly ask Butch if he wants to try for another one. Without hesitation, he jumps at the opportunity and I hurry to get him set up again. Butch's excitement from the first deer left him still shaking and unable to get settled on the second deer. But in a moment, he settles and goes to shoot. He pulls the trigger, but nothing happens. Butch tells me the safety must be on. I assure him that the safety is off, but when he tries again nothing happens. At this moment, I realize that in our excitement I never racked another bullet in the chamber! Quickly I load the gun and try to get Butch settled on the deer again. Just like before, Butch is shaking from excitement – so much so that, when he shoots, he misses. I tell him that we missed it and he immediately asked if I am sure and if it was a clean miss. I assure him that it was, as he had been shaking so hard that there was no way we were near the deer on that shot! Despite



this, Butch and I both continue to shake with excitement and talk about the deer we were able to harvest. This hunt taught me so much about hunting and what a privilege it is to be able to help others and is now my go-to story about hunting. Although I had felt I was not cut out for guiding, Butch proved me wrong that day. I am so thankful for this experience and I encourage everyone to step out of their comfort zone. Sometimes you are surprised at what you can do when you try!

- April Burton



VA STATE CHAPTER

VA NWTf “Zooms” in to the New Year

Jon Joyner – Virginia State Chapter President

Conservation and the mission never stop. NWTf chapter leaders from across the state convened for our annual kick off and board meetings on Saturday January 16, 2021, from the comfort of their own homes and perhaps with a few of them in their camo PJ's. Typically, these meetings occur in-person, on the 3rd weekend in January in our unofficial home away from home, the Holiday Inn Valleyview in Roanoke, culminating with our call makers competition and the VA NWTf State Awards banquet. But alas, we are still in a global pandemic and as such we adapted to the new norm.

There were over 20 chapters to join in on the meeting, where we reflected on the challenges the NWTf faced and our successes in helping the organization survive through one of the most difficult years we have ever faced.

We welcomed in our new officers and Executive Board members and celebrated the dedication and hard work of our outgoing officers, followed by recapping the 2020 successes and our contributions to the “Call for All” campaign that ran through late summer.

From there, state chapter president, Jon Joyner, and vice-president, Bear Davidson, went on to present goals and initiatives for the current year, which included the creation of committee to help



chapters with funding for outreach events and tips and ideas how to keep chapters active and engaged during the pandemic, so that when we emerge on the other side, we are energized and ready to hit the ground running. Another focus point discussed was the (un)-natural decline in memberships due to almost all of the fundraising banquets (our primary source of membership recruitment) were canceled. We discussed ideas for hosting virtual events and membership drives to help drive back up our membership numbers and discussed the importance of continuing our mission of outreach in our communities. One way we can all help is by referring a family or friend to our national membership drive campaign, in which you are able to go online to https://your.nwtf.org/membership_drive/ and renew your membership for \$35. In doing so, the NWTf will send you a \$25 Bass Pro gift card and you can allocate the membership credit to your local chapter during the signup process.

Our district biologist, Cully McCurdy, updated chapter leaders on habitat work and other projects going on throughout the state, further proving that conservation does not stop, even in a global pandemic and proudly announced that we have successfully launched the Conservation Seed program in Virginia, where current NWTf members are eligible to purchase high quality seed products, such as Roundup Ready Corn, Sorghum, Winter Wheat, and Soy Beans at very aggressive pricing compared to purchasing over the counter, as long as the use is to support wildlife, such as food plot plantings. We are excited to say that the initial response we had to the interest survey posted on our chapter Facebook page and website yielded a great response, and we anticipate an even better response once the seed becomes available for sale. More info on that will be forthcoming.

As we moved through the business of the day, we also noted that one of our conservation heroes, retired DWR biologist **Gary Norman**, was nationally recognized by the NWTf with the Wayne Bailey Lifetime Achievement Award and was to be presented with the award at the national convention awards ceremony, but was unable to attend. Cully has since been able to present Gary with the award at the most recent DWR Board Meeting on January 21, 2021.

Our Outreach Coordinators provided updates and goals for 2021 and are all looking forward to being able to coordinate events with chapters across the state as restrictions loosen up and it is safe to do so, and our subcommittees provided updates on the various activities and initiatives that are pertinent to them and the chapter mission.

We wrapped up the day with recognizing the chapters across the state that didn't let the pandemic stand in their way of continuing the mission and provided encouragement that together, we can continue to make a difference and have an impact on the wild turkey and the communities we reside in.

While there is no substitute for meeting in person and enjoying each other's company in a group social setting, sharing stories of successes in the field or in the community, sharing pictures of last year's harvest, or high-fiving our dedicated brothers and sisters in conservation for an awesome event at our annual rendezvous in Roanoke, somehow, we managed to make the best of it sitting miles apart from one another on the other side of a camera. We truly have the best members and volunteers that any organization could ever ask for and for that we are blessed.

**VIRGINIA STATE CHAPTER**
NATIONAL WILD TURKEY FEDERATION



JON JOYNER AND CULLY MCCURDY PRESENT MATT KLINE WITH THE 2020 VDWR ANDREW HUFFMAN AWARD FOR CONTRIBUTIONS TO WILD TURKEY MANAGEMENT AND CONSERVATION IN VIRGINIA

2020 PHOTOS





VIRGINIA STATE CHAPTER

NATIONAL WILD TURKEY FEDERATION



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APPLE VALLEY AND FAITHFUL CALL CHAPTERS TROUT FISHING



National Wild Turkey Federation Youth Essay Contest “The Hunt”

Attention JAKES and Xtreme JAKES members, here's your chance to put your writing and storytelling skills to work. Simply write a 500 word, or less, essay describing a hunting or outdoor experience you've had, and how it has affected your life. **Entry deadline is December 3, 2021.**

Include in “The Hunt” essay, what or who inspired the interest for the hunt. Has your interest been inspired by a JAKES event, 4-H shooting event or any other type of hunting and shooting event? If so, how? Please include what made that hunt special. The story can include more than one outdoor adventure.

Send a picture (if available) with caption along with “The Hunt” essay.

The essay of “The Hunt” does not have to include the harvesting of any game.

Please limit your essay to 500 words or less.

Prizes will be awarded in two categories,

1. JAKES 12 years old and under
2. Xtreme JAKES 13 to 17 years old.

Prizes:

1st - \$250.00

2nd - \$150.00

3rd - \$50.00

4th & 5th - \$25.00

All JAKES ages 17 and under are eligible to enter the contest.

Entries **MUST** include the **Virginia State JAKES Youth Essay Contest Entry Form** that is available on our web site, www.vanwtf.org or from your local NWTf Chapter.

Entries must be received by **December 3, 2021**, and can be mailed or emailed to:

Tim Burton

4640 Franklin Street

Rocky Mount, VA 24151

tandkburton84@yahoo.com

540-484-3041



VIRGINIA STATE CHAPTER

NATIONAL WILD TURKEY FEDERATION



Take a child outdoors this spring, introduce them and others to our pastime, help create new hunters, or take your neighbor who maybe doesn't have anywhere to hunt. Good luck afield, have fun, be safe, and thank you for helping the NWTF
“SAVE THE HABITAT, SAVE THE HUNT”!