



RIVER FALLS SPORTSMEN'S CLUB

# THE FIRING LINE

OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE RIVER FALLS SPORTSMEN'S CLUB

JUNE, 2025

## THIS ISSUE:

**Consider traveling to an Indianhead trap event**

**Members Thomas, Mendoza remembered**

**Raffle gun descriptions**

2025

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

### **PRESIDENT**

John Pietenpol  
715-781-0799

### **VICE-PRESIDENT**

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715-781-7708

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Ben Gaus

### **RANGE MASTER**

Ed Gibb

### **CHIEF INSTRUCTOR**

Kevin Larson  
715-495-5114

### **CLUB MANAGER**

Eric Swenson  
715-760-0499

### **DIRECTORS**

Dan Herum  
Rachel Vogt  
Nate Schultz

## 3D archery concept proposed

### *Advocates looking for member input*

Directors heard broad details at the April meeting about an initiative by members Nick Larson and Eric Sterner to explore the development of a 3-dimensional archery course on club property.

The men said they'd work on a "second-tier" sketch for a proposal that should include -- in the words of president John Pietenpol -- "safety, cost, steps and scope..." for the board to consider.

Sterner said his interest stems from a desire to shoot in an archery league, but would prefer to do so within the River Falls Sportsmen's Club rather than having to join a new club. He has been shooting trap at RFSC, and thinks the addition of 3D would enhance the shooting sports offerings, adding that he's willing to donate time and energy to help make that happen.

It's thought that a small course that utilizes the 40-yard existing range could be constructed for about \$6,000. That amount would likely buy 12-15 3D targets.

"I think it would be good for the club to offer a more robust Archery offering. I know many of the guys I shoot and hunt with also enjoy archery and think it could help increase membership and potentially engagement from our current membership," Sterner

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## Gun raffle tickets still available

Volunteer Nick Larson updated the board in April that about 100 tickets had been sold and another 100 were distributed at the recent trap captain's meeting. Larson planned to visit several River Falls taverns with samples of the 12-gun offering in coming weeks to stir up additional interest.

The drawing will be held at 3 pm, Sunday, July 13th, during the club shoot. Ticket-holders need not be present to win and have the choice to claim the firearm or cash value.

Tickets are available for purchase at the clubhouse or from various members.

The raffle is intended to be the major fundraiser for the club in

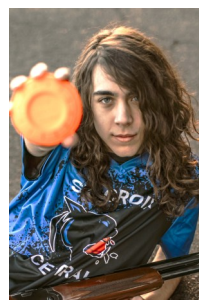
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Blake Boyd



Oliver Cran



Garrett Engesether



Justin Kamm



James Vogt

## SCC seniors highlighted

Spring graduations represent a milestone in the lives of many, including some River Falls Sportsmen's Club families.

Here are several St. Croix Central High School seniors who have been involved with the school trap programs or other RFSC activities:

-- **Blake Boyd**, son of Ronnie and Jennifer Boyd, St. Croix Central High School, plans to join the Marine Corps. His school interests included shooting sports, working out, and spending time with family and friends.

-- **Oliver Cran**, son of Brad and Tawnya Cran, plans to attend the Advanced Welding Institute at Eagle River this fall. Through high school, he enjoyed trap-shooting, four-wheeling, helping out on the family farm, working on small engines, hunting and fishing.

-- **Garrett Engesether**, son of Danelle Hanken and Shay Engesether, St. Croix Central High School, plans to pursue a college degree in psychology and criminal justice. His hobbies include arts and crafts, baking, video games, and collecting military surplus.

-- **Justin Kamm**, son of Mack and Elizabeth Kamm, St. Croix Central High School, will attend the North Dakota State College of Science, Wahpeton, where he is enrolled in the John Deere tech program.

-- **James Vogt**, son of Rachel and Jeff Vogt, St. Croix Central High School, plans to attend Michigan Technical University in Houghton, Mich. His school interests included trap, band, and fishing.



**New gravel near the gun racks was part of Spring clean-up day.**

*Please welcome these new RFSC members!*

Steve Bernard and father, Dan Bernard; Landis Brozack. **(March)**

**(April)** Unavailable

**(May)** Unavailable

## Upcoming Club events

- 2025 Summer trap hours 5 -9 pm, Tuesdays and Wednesdays, and Sundays from 11-3 pm. First official week of league started April 29th, 2025.
- Pistol Night began at 6 pm, Wednesday, May 30th
- Aug. 1st & 2nd; 4-H "Fair Shoot", directed by Chief Instructor Kevin Larson. Youth shooters begin competition Friday evening on the trap range, then return Saturday for an all-day event that begins with archery qualification at 8 am, followed by .22 rifle demonstrations all day on the ranges. Larson said the event essentially lasts 12 hours with participants bringing some food for sale on a "free-will offering" and sharing basis. Clubhouse will also be open for some additional snack and food sales.
- Regular board meetings begin at 7 pm, the second Monday of each month.

## Invite: Indianhead league offers fun outings, friendly environment

For those who enjoy shooting trap, keep an eye out for new clubhouse signage about an upcoming Indianhead trap league shoot at another club. For newer members who might not know how to participate, President John Pietenpol offers up this short backgrounder to entice more trap shooters to take part:

The Indianhead trap league takes place at 10 different trap ranges in our general area with the most distant being a bit under two hours away. Each year, five of the 10 participating clubs host a shooting event at their respective ranges.

Shoots are held from 9 am to 5 pm, on Sundays in June and July, with one more shoot in August.

Participants shoot two back-to-back rounds of trap for \$12. It's easy to sign up. Just show up, go to the

registration table, and register to shoot on a squad. If you'd like one or both of the rounds to count as a score (s) for the summer league, just declare it to another club member at the shoot. Otherwise, you can let the RFSC league manager know prior to shooting the rounds.

Who can participate? Any junior or adult member of our club can attend any of the shoots. For River Falls Sportsmen's Club to qualify at each of the shoots, we must have at least seven shooters post scores at the event. In the past it wasn't a problem achieving that level of participation at different clubs, but over the last few years we have struggled to get seven shooters to show up at some of the events.

This is a great way to broaden your shooting skills and to represent the

River Falls Sportsmen's Club!

If you have any questions, please contact me. I have personally participated in these shoots for at least five years. They are great fun especially -- if you round up a few other members to travel along. The clubs all provide food and refreshments too.

The 2025 schedule looks like this:

- June 15, Balsam Lake Rod & Gun
- June 29, Brill Area Sportsman Club
- July 13, Hudson Rod & Gun Club
- July 27, Fox Creek Gun Club
- Aug. 10, Amery Gun Club.

I hope you will consider coming to one of the different clubs to represent RFSC. [jdpietenpol@gmail.com](mailto:jdpietenpol@gmail.com); (715) 781-0799 (call or text)

## Gun raffle...

**Continued from Page 1**

2025 -- a decision made by the board following last year's banquet fall banquet.

Guns on the raffle and cash value for each include:

- Beretta Silver Pigeon Vittoria O/U 12-Ga. (\$1,775)
- Christensen Arms Mesa FFT 7mm mag (\$950)
- Weatherby Orion Sporting 12-Ga (\$750)
- Marlin 1894 44 Mag lever (\$725)
- Winchester SX4 12-Ga semi (\$625)
- Henry 2A Edition lever-action .22LR (\$525)
- Colt Python Stainless Steel .357 Mag. (\$1,000)
- Browning X Bolt Pro 300 PRC (\$950)
- CZ Sharp Tail 12-Ga SxS (\$725)
- Anderson Manufacturing AR-10 .308 semi (\$625)
- Ruger AR 556 .556/.223 (\$600)
- EAA Girsan 1911 w/optics .45 ACP (\$500)

If you'd like a ticket(s) mailed to you for purchase, send an e-mail message to [RFSC@sbcglobal.net](mailto:RFSC@sbcglobal.net).

## 3D archery ...

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Sterner wrote in an e-mail exchange.

The men would appreciate hearing from others who may share their interest. Sterner suggested an online survey might help gauge sentiment but nothing has been organized yet.

Ideally, something could materialize by mid- to late summer, Sterner speculated, but added he's "let the demand from the club drive the format and size of the league going forward."

## Newsletter

Comments, tips, criticisms, contributions, obits, and club -- related questions are welcomed. Write, text or call Steve Dzubay at #715-821-7537 or [steven-dzubay@gmail.com](mailto:steven-dzubay@gmail.com).

Special thanks to Deb & Rich Cernohous for their proof-reading assistance.

For general club-related inquiries, write to [RFSC@sbcglobal.net](mailto:RFSC@sbcglobal.net).



## 'Appleseed' participants

Eight participants -- ranging from teenager to mid-fifties -- learned the fundamentals of rifle and pistol marksmanship combined with the storytelling of American Revolutionary War history during a two-day Project Appleseed event held at the RFSC April 26-27. Lead instructor Josh Knutson said the group consisted of "three ladies, three repeat shooters, one family of four and a husband/wife duo" from Wisconsin and Minnesota. Two "Rifleman" scores were reconfirmed during the 25-meter rifle clinic. Five instructors rotated roles throughout the session, Knutson said. Project Appleseed is a national non-profit program that organizes family friendly learning events, designed for all ages and experience levels. For more information, visit <https://appleseedinfo.org/about/> Photo courtesy of Belinda Hopp.



## Members lost

**Jack Thomas**, a longtime club member and popular trap league coach, died March 21, 2025. He was 79.

He was born on Nov. 21, 1945, in Carthage, MO. He grew up in the Rice Lake area, graduating from Rice Lake High School in 1963. He earned an associate degree in engineering from then-Wisconsin Indianhead Technical College, Eau Claire.

Jack honorably served his country for a year in Vietnam before marrying the love of his life, Diane Rust, in 1973. Together, they built a life in River Falls. Jack worked at Bob & Arnie's TV for a time before joining Ecolab, where he spent 43 years as a mechanical engineer, retiring in 2016.

He was an avid outdoorsman, enjoyed trap shooting and camping. He volunteered time to coach high school trap shooters at St. Croix Central and Tartan High School.

Jack was a member of the Methodist Church in New Richmond, serving as Trustee chairperson. He was also a dedicated Mason and member of the Zor Shrine Club. He also enjoyed ham radio communication, baking and doing embroidery.

He was preceded in death by his parents, Ellwood and Beth Thomas, and his adopted mother, Ardis Campbell Thomas, as well as sister Cathie Campbell and brother Don Campbell.

Jack is survived by wife Diane, daughters Katie (Dan) Shipman and Pam (Olin) Glick, and granddaughter Asher Shipman. He also leaves behind his sister Jill Thomas, sister-in-law Sally Campbell, and other relatives.

Memorials are preferred to the Shriners Children's Hospital. Services were held March 27th at the New Richmond United Methodist Church with interment in Nora Cemetery, Rice Lake. Bakken-Young Funeral & Cremation Services provided arrangements.

Mr. Thomas' obituary posting elicited some complimentary comments, relevant to his involvement as a trap-shooting enthusiast:

-- "Condolences to Jack's family. He was a great coach for the SCC Trap team for many years and will be greatly missed..."

-- "He truly loved to help kids. He will be missed by so many..."

-- "It is with heavy heart that we post about the loss of Coach Jack Thomas. Coach Jack elevated our team with his immense knowledge of the sport of trap and commitment to competition. Always one to help make every athlete better no matter the skill level, his dedication to our team will NEVER be forgotten. Coach Jack's legacy will live on and we will "pull" this spring in his memory..."



**Jack Thomas**



## Spring improvements

**A small army of volunteers turned out May 10th to spruce-up the club grounds and area roadsides. Along with tree-trimming and flowerbed improvements, volunteers laid down new gravel near the gun racks. Photo to courtesy of Rich Cernohous.**

## Board briefs

-- **TREASURER BEN GAUS** confirmed at the March director's meeting that he'd purchased two truckloads of birds; one was scheduled to arrive in April, the second in June, scoring a significant price discount.

-- **AWARD PLAQUES FOR 2024** have been ordered and are in-production. Plaques from 2022 and 2023 are at the clubhouse, awaiting pickup by the respective honorees. Also, a new computer has been procured and deployed at the club, thanks to Gaus "and friends," he reported.

-- **THERE WAS DISCUSSION** in March about how to best invest a \$1,500 gift from Margaret Wilson, given in honor of late husband and member, Ron Wilson. Board consensus was to look at replacing the infield lights with LED lighting. The project is likely to involve rewiring due to voltage issues, so director Dan Herum offered to search out cost estimates on that and bringing a line from the deeper well on the new acreage to the clubhouse. In April, Herum reported the LED upgrade would likely cost more than \$3,000. He hadn't received an estimate on the well line. No action was taken.

-- **A SPIRITED EXCHANGE** unfolded over an idea brought to the board by Ed Gibb from a trap league participant. The member suggested inviting punch-card purchasers who upon using up a punch card, could jot their name and address on the spent card and place it in a jar for a periodic drawing awarding a free punch card. Talk focused on what benefit such a freebie would have for the club, given that punch card pricing which doesn't particularly benefit the organization. The idea ultimately died on a split board vote with the rationale that club members need not subsidize regular shooters.

-- **VICE-PRESIDENT PARKER HEISE** noted that range lead reclamation remains a possibility as a vendor contacted him noting they'd be visiting South St. Paul and a central Wisconsin location in coming weeks. Heise also announced that Cody Krueger of Premier Property Maintenance, River Falls, had accepted the job of mowing and trimming club grounds on an as-needed basis. Other vendors required visits on a weekly basic -- something beyond our needs, Heise reported in April.

-- **CLUB MANAGER ERIC SWENSON** reported the presence of three deceased goat carcasses along the boundary fence near the benches on the 200-yard range. It's believed they were dumped there in protest of club activities. President John Pietenpol suggested removal be included on the list of clean-up day activities -- without reprisal against anyone.

-- **AFTER ONLY ONE APPLICATION** was received for the RFSC scholarship ahead of the April 30th deadline, President John Pietenpol suggested the deadline be extended until May 31st, with the scholarship to be awarded later this year.

**Esekiel "Zeke" Mendoza**, club member, veteran and 22-year year boiler plant operator at UW-River Falls, died on April 8, 2025. He was 59.

A native of Richmond, Calif., he joined the U.S. Marines after graduating Richmond High School in 1984. He was an Airborne Ranger -- a "testament to the quiet courage that defined his life", his family said. He later served in the Wisconsin National Guard, completing multiple overseas deployments and "continuing to build friendships based on loyalty and mutual respect. His service was never about recognition. It was about duty, integrity, and brotherhood," his obituary stated. During his military service, he also met the love of his life, Roxann -- his best friend and soulmate.

In 2002, Zeke moved to River Falls, WI to be with Roxann, they married on December 26, 2003. He began work as a boiler plant operator at UW-River Falls that same year. He was known for his strong work ethic, humility, and loyalty to coworkers -- regularly taking extra shifts to support his team. He was a loving protector to his wife, surrounding her with love, laughter, and peace. Zeke was the steady heartbeat to his children and grandchildren -- strong, wise, and quietly nurturing. He made them feel safe and deeply loved with his kind words, watchful eyes and calming presence.

He enjoyed simple things: spending time with family, going to eat or see a movie, and enjoying a Bloody Mary with his wife.

He was an active member of the River Falls Sportsman's Club, leading not with noise, but with action.

Zeke used the range to zero-in his guns and keep his skills sharp. He was a regular at the Spring clean-up day and attended the January annual meeting to renew his membership -- usually having to depart early as he worked most weekends.

Zeke is survived by his wife, Roxann (Muto) Mendoza; daughter through marriage, Tara (Richard) Lueneburg, and their children -- his beloved grandchildren Aydin, Kaiya, and Xavier, New Richmond; and son through marriage, Trevor Brown of River Falls. Also, his siblings, Teresa Ochoa, Heli-odora "Lola" Navarro, Rafael Mendoza, Raul Mendoza, Ernesto Mendoza, Taide Mendoza, all of California; godchild, Alicia Young; and many nieces and nephews. He is preceded in death by his parents, Rafael and Eufemia (Albres) Mendoza; and siblings, Margarita Gonzalez, Gabriel Mendoza, Erica Yolanda Gonzalez.

A celebration of Life was held May 30 with interment at Greenwood Cemetery with military Honors provided by the American Legion Post 121 Honor Squad. Bakken-Young Funeral & Cremation Services assisted the family.

Mr. Mendoza's obituary posting brought forth kind words from friends. Here



**Zeke Mendoza**

RIVER FALLS SPORTSMEN'S CLUB

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### Club gifts to Disabled hunt

Club manager Eric Swenson delivered a \$500 check to Bruce Olson with Whispering Emerald Ridge Game Farm on March 11th as a contribution toward an upcoming hunt for the disabled.

RANGE FACILITIES ARE OPEN TO MEMBERS 365 DAYS PER YEAR. WE ONLY REQUIRE THAT YOU OBSERVE POSTED SHOOTING HOURS AS FOLLOWS:

WEEKDAYS FROM: 9 AM TO 8 PM

SATURDAY AND SUNDAY FROM: 9 AM TO 8 PM

THE CLUBHOUSE IS ONLY OPEN DURING TRAP LEAGUE HOURS (JANUARY TO OCTOBER), WHICH ARE AS FOLLOWS:

TUESDAY 5 PM – 9 PM SUMMER, AND FALL TRAP LEAGUE

WEDNESDAY 5 PM – 9 PM SUMMER TRAP LEAGUE

SUNDAY 11 AM – 3 PM WINTER, SUMMER, AND FALL TRAP LEAGUE

[WWW.RIVERFALLSPORTSMENSClub.COM/](http://WWW.RIVERFALLSPORTSMENSClub.COM/)