

Getting to Know You: YOUTH MENTOR Q & A

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It's wonderful to know that outdoor and hunting organizations talk about fostering experiences for youth to get excited about and involved in. The cultivation of enthusiasm in the next generation of hunters is so important to preserve the way of life we all enjoy and hold dear. NAVHDA has so many wonderful programs designed to encourage family participation in the organization. There are not only opportunities for kids to test dogs in the organization but also to provide them with the education to know the facets of the test and how to be successful with their hunting partner.

THE KRISTIN RIESER YOUTH AIMS & RULES CLINIC PROGRAM

This program was established by Jim and Donna Rieser of Shooting Starr Kennels, in memory of their daughter, Kristin. Kristin was a passionate enthusiast for all things NAVHDA, AKC and NSTRA. She successfully ran dogs in all levels of NAVHDA's testing program and was an accomplished breeder of German Shorthaired Pointers receiving many Breeders Awards. Kristin was an active volunteer for her local chapter, a cheerleader for all other NAVHDA members, and an aspiring veterinarian. Kristin's family created this fund to honor her dedication to NAVHDA in a way that would encourage other young people to follow in her footsteps.

The Aims & Rules Clinics are an educational tool developed by NAVHDA to help dog handlers understand the testing system. Over the two-day clinic weekend, handlers not only learn about the different components that their dog is tested on but also get the opportunity to step into a judge's shoes and score the performance of the dogs at the clinic. The Kristin Reiser fund was developed to cover the cost of youth interested in attending an Aims & Rules Clinic. Youth are asked to write a short summary of their experiences with hunting dogs, NAVHDA and shooting, include a letter of recommendation and a picture with their application.

THE YOUTH MENTOR PROGRAM

The NAVHDA International Youth Committee is excited to announce a new facet of the committee: The Youth Mentor Program. These youth have not only attended an Aims & Rules Clinic, run a dog in the NAVHDA system, but they are eager and willing to share those experiences with other youth interested in doing the same things.



ALISON WITH KEITH KEMMER AND ROY AMES DURING THE AIMS & RULES CLINIC AT THE WISCONSIN RIVER CHAPTER.



MAKENZIE AT AN AIMS & RULES CLINIC WHEN SHE WAS 10 AT THE ROCKY MOUNTAIN CHAPTER
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YOUTH MENTOR Q & A

The following young ladies got together and shared some insight on their experiences to date during our Q & A session.

Q: Tell me about what NAVHDA chapter you are a part of and about your dog:

Alison: I am a member of the Missouri Uplands, Missouri South, Illowa and Spoon River Chapters. I have a 3-year-old Pudelpointer named Brown Bullet's Benelli, aka "Benelli."

Makenzie: I am a member of the Rocky Mountain, Black Hills, Frontier and West Slope NAVHDA Chapters. I have a 3-year-old German Shorthaired Pointer named Surefire's Knockin on Heavens Door and I call her Faith.

Q: Tell me about the Aims & Rules Clinic you attended:
Alison: I was 11. Roy Ames and Keith Kemmer led the clinic at the Wisconsin River Chapter.

Makenzie: I did a regular (Natural Ability/Utility) Aims Clinic when I was 10 at the Rocky Mountain Chapter with Phil Swain. I also did an Invitational Aims Clinic with Curt Fry when I was 13.

Q: What did you think when your parents told you that you could apply for the Kristin Rieser Fund and get your clinic paid for?

Alison: I had been so focused on wanting to get my puppy for so long that doing the clinic meant I was one

step closer to my dream. I was really nervous trying to come up with what to write about.

Makenzie: I was also waiting for my puppy when I wrote my application. I remember for the first clinic my mom would ask me a question and I would write a sentence. She would ask another question and I would write another sentence until she didn't have any questions left.

Q: You both submitted a letter of recommendation with your application. Who did you ask and what was that like?

Alison: It was so scary at the time. I asked Eric Schenck and he gave me a glowing recommendation so it was really great!

Makenzie: I remember being so scared to call them on the phone! I asked Brian Thoman and Jason Carter for letters at my first clinic. Then I asked Tom Swezey and Brian Thoman for letters for my Invitational clinic. As soon as they said yes, I remember taking a big sigh of relief!



ALISON, CAREFULLY FILLING OUT HER JUDGING CARD



ALISON, WITH BENELLI AT WISCONSIN RIVER



MAKENZIE, LOOKING ON, AT THE ROCKY MOUNTAIN CHAPTER CLINIC LED BY PHIL SWAIN
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Q: Since it was a little intimidating, what would you tell other kids that are getting ready to ask that same thing from someone they know in NAVHDA?

Alison: Go for it. It really wasn't as bad as I built it up to be.

Makenzie: They aren't going to say "NO" so ask with confidence. All the adults in NAVHDA are so supportive and considerate of youth. You will be surprised how excited they are to help you. You will probably make their day that you came to them!

Q: What was your favorite part of the Aims & Rules Clinic you attended?

Alison: The Natural Ability puppy didn't show up, so when we got out of the classroom, I got to run my puppy, Benelli. The scoring was fun, but I really enjoyed watching the dogs work the most!

Makenzie: Phil Swain told me to read the Aims & Rules book before the clinic. During the classroom portions, he would call on me first sometimes to keep me involved. It was fun knowing answers to questions that some of the adults didn't.

Q: What part of the clinic challenged you?

Alison: Some parts of the Utility test were hard to see. Mainly because I was little and had to make sure to be

in the front. During the Duck Search I just guessed at my score because I couldn't see the dog in the water most of the time.

Makenzie: I agree... I was short too! Steadiness was challenging. I kept forgetting to watch the dog because I was looking at the gunners and the bird so when the dog moved I was like, "Oh, no! When did he move?"

Q: What about the Invitational Clinic? Did you see the same challenges?

Makenzie: Since I knew the components of the Natural Ability and Utility tests, I found this clinic easier. We went into more depth on the concepts and I actually found the clinic easier after being through the other one.

Q: Did the Aims & Rules Clinic help you prepare to run your NAVHDA tests?

Alison: Definitely! I knew what the judges were looking for and why. When I ran Benelli in the Aims & Rules Clinic, she really struggled with her tracking. It gave me time through the summer to work on that before her Natural Ability test and she did great at her test because I knew how to prepare her better. It gave me insight on how to move forward with my training.

Makenzie: I agree. Even when Faith had a bobble in her Utility test, I knew exactly why the judges scored it



the way they did and what I needed to work on before her next test. I'm so excited I did the Invitational clinic because I know exactly how I want to set up my summer of training to be prepared for September.

Q: Would you attend another Aims & Rules Clinic if you had the opportunity to do so?

Alison: Absolutely!

Makenzie: Definitely! Every clinic I grasp more of the concepts and get a refresher on things I have forgotten.

Q: What other take aways do you want to share with other youth about your experiences from the Aims & Rules Clinics you attended?

Alison: I never realized what the judges really do during the test. Seeing everything they are looking for and how they set everything up to make my puppy successful was really neat.

Makenzie: I realized how hard the judges pay attention to everything going on. They have multiple dogs that they are evaluating through the day and they can keep everything straight to be able to answer question and help handlers at the end of the day. Plus, I think it's really amazing that they choose to give up a weekend with their families to volunteer to judge my dog.

Q: Why did you say "Yes" to being a Youth Mentor for NAVHDA?

Alison: It's easier for kids to talk to other kids and I want them to feel comfortable asking questions to someone that has been in their shoes.

Makenzie: To be someone that others can come up and talk to as well as to set an example for other youth in the organization. We've been through the same things so we can share how we prepared and understand when they say something seems scary or hard.

Q: What's your favorite NAVHDA memory?

Alison: My first NA test. I got a tip to watch where they were planting the birds so I knew where to go so I could help my puppy. Her field run was great!

Makenzie: My first NA test with Faith. It went awful but at the same time it was hilarious watching all the crazy puppy things she did. It was just one day and to be honest, I haven't been happier than that day!

Q: What tip do you have for youth just starting in NAVHDA?

Alison: Go to as many training days as you can. Stick with it when things are going rough; keep working on making your puppy listen because it will pay off.

Makenzie: If the outcome isn't what you want, don't be discouraged. Stick with it and there are people willing to help you get to your goals. The low points are learning moments and your dog will always be your best friend.

Q: We are going to change gears a bit so you can share about yourselves. What's your favorite hunting spot?

Alison: South Dakota for pheasants.

Makenzie: New Mexico for desert quail.

Q: What type of gun do you shoot?

Alison: CZ 20 gauge over/under.

Makenzie: Franchi Instinct Catalyst 20 gauge over/under.

Q: What is your NAVHDA goal for 2024?

Alison: Preparing Benelli to run Utility in 2025.

Makenzie: Running the Invitational with Faith in September, 2024.

Q: What is your favorite thing to do with your dog?

Alison: Play in the snow or swim with Benelli. She also likes to snuggle and steal my spot when I get out of bed.

Makenzie: Showmanship. Faith also is good at giving snuggles and kisses.

Q: Outside of NAVHDA, what do you like to do?

Alison: I am involved in Archery, Basketball, Track and Student Council. I really like helping whelp puppies and all aspects of caring for momma and pups.

Makenzie: I compete in Skeet, Sporting Clays and Trap Shotgun events. I like to show Faith and my dad's dog, Heidi, in Rally, Obedience and Showmanship events. I also like to draw with pastel pencils and play piano.

Becoming involved in the NAVHDA Youth Mentor program provides youth the opportunity to unleash their creativity and share their perspective within the organization. The insight and ability to start conversations not only provides skills to prepare them for involvement in hunting and conservation organizations in the future but also gives the NAVHDA International Youth Committee incredible feedback in setting goals and developing programs that are unique, engaging and exciting for the next generation of hunters and conservationists. Youth that are interested in joining this program are encouraged to reach out to the NAVHDA International Youth Committee. As we surround the youth in NAVHDA with a focus of preservation of hunting dogs, wild bird hunting, and a sheer love for the outdoors, the prospects of the upcoming generation to continue to uphold the vision set forth will certainly shine bright! 🐾

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