

(6/19/24 District Administrator's Corner Article)

What do the following school districts in southwestern Wisconsin all have in common (Mineral Point, Dodgeville, Barneveld, Blanchardville, Lancaster, Boscobel, Riverdale, Wauzeka-Stueben, Prairie du Chein, River Ridge, Kickapoo, Sauk Prairie, Richland, Seneca, Platteville, Potosi, Cuba City, North Crawford, Weston, Reedsburg, Benton, Southwestern, Shullsburg)? And what is the fastest growing activity in high schools across the nation?

Each of these high schools, as well as River Valley, have a clay target team. Clay target leagues are in fact America's fastest-growing school sport and we have some of the sharpest shots in the state right here in our Valley. As a matter of fact, Chase Bindl just became the Wisconsin State Champion of the Wisconsin State High School Clay Target League in Division 2A! Our varsity team placed 3rd and our junior varsity team placed 6th in our division.

Though not a traditional high school sport, students in our region are joining in record numbers and competing with others across the state. Open to students in 6th through 12th grade (who have firearms safety certificates), this group follows guidelines by the USA Clay Target League (a nonprofit organization that facilitates state target shooting competition).

Clay target shooting, sometimes confused with skeet or trap shooting, is a team sport and emphasizes safe firearms handling while they zero in on accuracy. Students compete "virtually" against other teams and then scores are posted and compared. So the students in River Valley compete at the Spring Green Rod and Gun Club, and then compare accuracy to other teams in the conference. They do not have to travel to compete. Student athletes must meet their school's standards to be eligible to participate, just like any other sport. Currently, there are more than 150 teams across the state with more being added each year.

For many students who really enjoy clay target shooting, there is no desire to hunt. The two activities do not have to go hand in hand. It is a fun hobby that can be enjoyed by anyone of any skill level, and the teamwork is great for our students. It emphasizes accountability, fun and marksmanship.

To the families and supporters of this incredible River Valley activity, thank you for taking this skill-based traditional activity and making it possible for many kids to participate. Thank you for your extraordinary commitment to yet another great activity for the kids of River Valley. This league and team provides a safe, positive atmosphere for our students to focus on safety, sportsmanship, and fun. (To research more information check out <https://wi.usaclaytarget.com/>)

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District Administrator