

CELEBRATING 250TH ANNIVERSARY  
OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

June—July 2026



**BACK  
HOME  
AGAIN IN  
INDIANA**

**FORT WAYNE CHAPTER**



**NEWS**

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Wayne Chapter of The  
Izaak Walton League of  
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Reserved.

## GOD BLESS THE USA.

Tomorrow, we will commemorate a monumental milestone: 250 years since the Continental Congress adopted the Declaration of Independence. On July 2, the delegates made a pivotal decision to sever ties with Great Britain, and over the next two days, they diligently revised this groundbreaking document that would define the nation's core values. Interestingly, many anticipated that we would celebrate Independence Day on July 2, rather than the now-iconic July 4.

Since that historic day in 1776, the United States has expanded remarkably, transforming from a fledgling collection of 13 colonies inhabited by approximately 2.5 million people to a diverse and sprawling nation of 50 states, 14 territories, and one federal district, now home to over 342 million citizens.

### Did you know?

- ◆ It wasn't until 1941, that Congress established the Fourth of July, or Independence Day, as a national holiday.
- ◆ Betsy Ross sewed the first American flag in May or June of 1776 after three members of a secret committee from the Continental Congress—George Washington, Robert Morris, and George Ross—met with her in her home. The stars on the original American flag were arranged in a circle so that all the colonies would appear equal.
- ◆ Thomas Jefferson was the most eloquent writer and was tasked with drafting the original version of the Declaration of Independence. A total of 86 changes were made before the Continental Congress officially adopted the final version on July 4, 1776. Known as a talented writer, Jefferson hated having his work edited. He sat and fumed while the Continental Congress debated his draft version of the Declaration of Independence. Jefferson was especially peeved when the delegates deleted his reference to slavery, "the execrable commerce."
- ◆ On July 5, 1776, copies of the Declaration of Independence were distributed, and on July 6, The Pennsylvania Evening Post became the first newspaper to print the document. The 56 signers of the Declaration of Independence did not sign at the same time, nor did they sign on July 4, 1776. The official signing was on August 3, 1776, when 50 men signed it.
- ◆ The Liberty Bell rang from the tower of Independence Hall on July 8, 1776, as citizens gathered for the first public reading of the Declaration of Independence by Colonel John Nixon.
- ◆ The names of the signers of the Declaration of Independence were withheld from the public for more than six months to protect the signers. If independence had not been achieved, the treasonable act of the signers would have, by law, resulted in their deaths.
- ◆ In 1801, Thomas Jefferson began the tradition of hosting a public reception at the White House to celebrate the Fourth of July.
- ◆ Presidents John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, and James Monroe all passed away on the Fourth of July. Adams and Jefferson died on the same day, just hours apart, in 1826.
- ◆ Benjamin Franklin proposed the turkey as the national bird, but John Adams and Thomas Jefferson preferred the bald eagle.

#### References:

Jan Hommel, American Freedom Museum  
National Archives Declaration of Independence  
Library of Congress Independence Day archives.  
AI Overview

## BACK HOME AGAIN IN INDIANA!



Bre Butler, a proud third-generation member of the Fort Wayne Chapter of Izaak Walton, returned home for a brief visit after completing her second year of a full 4-year sports shooting scholarship at Georgia Southern University.



Used By Permission

This visit was fleeting, as she was on the verge of starting her third summer as Assistant Director Youth Rifle Instruction for the National Civilian Marksmanship Program (CMP).

During Spring Break, CMP flies her across the United States, imparting her knowledge of small-bore rifle shooting to eager young shooters.



While at home, she squeezed in a shoot at our range with Dad Chris, Papaw Jay, and Range Manager Pat White. During her first time shooting KYL and shooting Pat's Bergara, she nonchalantly outshot us all, easily spinning target after target at 50, 75, and 100 yards.

Our range holds a special place in her heart, as it was here that she first began her journey into the world of precision shooting. Recognizing her need for practicing three competition formats, including kneeling and prone positions—both of which were not initially offered at our range, Mike Sienk, one of our dedicated members, rose to the occasion.



Mike ingeniously constructed a raised platform, expanding the opportunities essential for Bre to hone her shooting skills.

Today, that platform is available to our member shooters who wish to shoot small-bore 22LR in prone and kneeling positions.



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As she dedicated countless hours to perfecting her shooting skills, she discovered a newfound passion for working with young athletes. This enthusiasm eventually opened the door to a rewarding summer position with CMT, where she could share her knowledge and inspire the next generation of shooter athletes.

Although she is currently pursuing a marketing degree, her true aspiration lies in becoming a professional shooting coach at a major university, where she hopes to combine her love for the sport with her desire to mentor and develop aspiring athletes.

During one of Bre's shooting exhibitions for our youth programs, this charming little blonde girl approached Bre with wide, curious blue eyes. With an innocent smile, she asked, "Are you someone famous?"



Her dedication and talent have been recognized; she is a three-time "All-American" since starting her collegiate shooting career at Georgia Southern University, where she has broken several Georgia Southern shooting records and was named the Southern Conference "Athlete Of The Year".

She competed in the Jr. Olympics three times and represented the United States in world competition in Peru, South America before beginning her collegiate shooting career.

A large photo montage of her hangs in the Anschütz factory showroom in Germany.



Father/Daughter Prayer before each National Match. Dad also served as RSO for many National matches.



Bre's journey is a testament to her hard work, passion, and the impact she has on the shooting community, and the Fort Wayne Chapter of Izaak Walton is proud to call her “one of our own”.

## Izaak Walton Quote of the Month

**“Rivers and the inhabitants of the watery element are made for wise men to contemplate, and for fools to pass by without consideration.”**

## The Word From The Top

### CHAPTER ON THE MOVE!



The Fort Wayne Izaak Walton League proudly hosted our **2nd Annual Kids .22 Shoot**, and once again the event was an overwhelming success. We received phenomenal feedback from participants and their families, and we're already looking forward to making next year's event even bigger and better. It was especially rewarding to welcome back many returning families while also meeting a number of first-time attendees who joined us for a fun-filled evening on the range.

This annual event continues to provide an excellent opportunity to introduce the next generation to the shooting sports while emphasizing the importance of firearm safety, responsible gun handling, and proper marksmanship. Teaching these fundamentals in a safe, controlled, and family-friendly environment is one of the many ways our chapter helps preserve our outdoor heritage for future generations.

Throughout the evening, participants rotated through multiple shooting stations featuring a wide variety of targets and challenges. Young shooters tested their skills on paper targets, balloons, steel targets, and clay targets at distances ranging from just 7 yards all the way out to 100 yards. The different target types and distances kept the event exciting while allowing each participant to build confidence and experience success. To top off an already memorable evening, every young shooter—and even their family members—went home with hats and keychains as a small token of our appreciation for attending. Seeing the smiles, excitement, and sense of accomplishment on each child's face made all of the planning and preparation worthwhile.

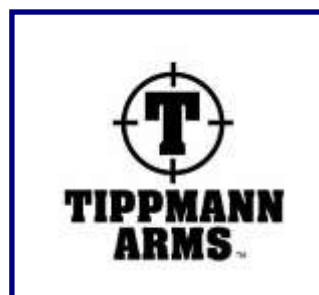
We are incredibly grateful for the generosity of the local companies and small businesses that partnered with us to make this year's event possible. A **HUGE** shout-out goes to **Tippmann Arms**, whose staff brought multiple configurations of their outstanding M4-22 rifles, **Hawke Optics** for furnishing their incredible rifle scopes, and \_\_\_\_\_ for furnishing Targets for our Youth Shooting Experience. Their hands-on support gave many young shooters the opportunity to try high-quality equipment while learning proper firearm handling techniques.



Respectfully,

President  
IWLA-FW

A heartfelt "Thank You" to **Tippmann Arms**, **Hawke Optics** and **Auburn Arms**, for without their generous support, our Youth Shooting Experience would not have been possible.



## INTRODUCTORY YOUTH SHOOT

Certified NRA Firearm Instructor Mark Ceccarelli giving Pre-shoot Firearm Safety Class.



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First time shooter building a lifetime memory of safe family range shooting, under careful one-on-one coaching.



In the presence of Lance Bratcher, Jr., a renowned speed shooter and World Record holder sponsored by Tippmann Arms, coaching a young enthusiast gets support and guidance that motivates the next generation of shooters, making this moment truly special.

## CHAPTER HOSTS HUNTERTOWN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE TO MEAL AND TOUR



Chapter Past President Jay Butler greeting each Chamber member upon arrival.

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Huntertown, IN Chamber of Commerce members hosted by the Chapter.





Chamber members moving through self serve food line of delicacies prepared by Chapter Hospitality Team.

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Chapter member and liaison to the Huntertown Chamber of Commerce, Brian Doepke, gives tour of our Chapter grounds.



## HERE & THERE AROUND THE CHAPTER

Our renovated East Hall set up for a Banquet. For information on rental call our chapter hotline [260-619-6768](tel:260-619-6768) or visit our website at [iwla-fw.org](http://iwla-fw.org)



New Sign-In Box installed at Walton Pond for convenience of our members and guests.

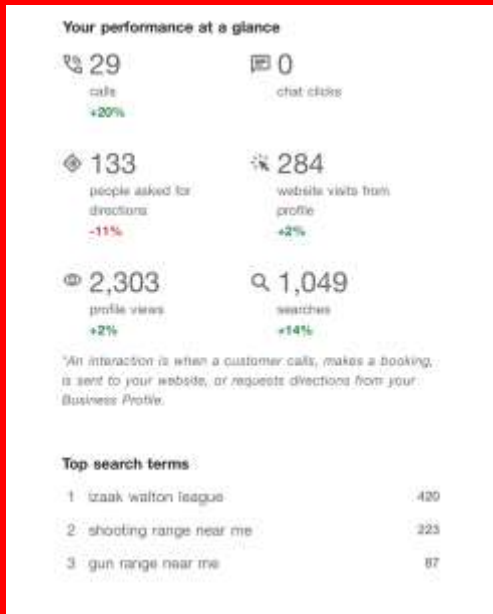


Member Mack Neukam earned his first 25-straight busted clays on Chapter Trap Range.

Life vest moved to new location. Please watch your step, as we haven't graded the buried powerline for our new pond aeration provided by Grant from the IN-Division Endowment and Grant from REMC.



## STATS ON OUR DIGITAL MARKETING



First contact is usually for our Rifle & Pistol Range shooting facilities, where enthusiasts can hone their skills in a safe and welcoming environment. However, many are pleasantly surprised to discover the extensive array of additional amenities awaiting them upon arrival, often leading them to join our chapter.

Beyond shooting, we offer scenic trails perfect for hiking and exploring the great outdoors, serene kayaking experiences on tranquil waters, and prime fishing spots teeming with life. For those who enjoy archery, our dedicated range provides the ideal setting to practice and refine their technique. Additionally, our trap and skeet facilities offer thrilling challenges for shotgun sports enthusiasts. With so much more to enjoy, our chapter truly stands out as a diverse recreational haven for outdoor activities in the Greater Fort Wayne area.

## ENJOYING OUR WOODLAND TRAILS

Karen Griggs, a dedicated Chapter Board Member and passionate environmentalist, delights in strolling along our Chapter trails each spring. As the vibrant native plants burst forth after the long, quiet winter, she finds joy in every blooming flower and budding leaf. Karen has taken the lead in guiding nature walks for both members and guests, inviting them to immerse themselves in the beauty around them. She often shares stunning photographs that she has captured during her explorations. With a gentle reminder to slow down and open our eyes wide, Karen encourages everyone to embrace the wonders of nature in all its glory.



## WOMEN IN THE OUTDOORS



For what may be the 20th consecutive year, the NWTF Women in The Outdoors event took place at the Fort Wayne Chapter, uniting women from diverse backgrounds to celebrate their love for the outdoors. Attendees had the opportunity to choose from a wide range of activities tailored to their interests, each offering a unique chance for skill-building and camaraderie.

The chapter's beautiful grounds were filled with energy, featuring tables set up both outdoors and in inviting indoor spaces, creating a warm and welcoming atmosphere. Participants were able to engage in various activities, including exciting archery sessions, scenic trail hikes, and small bore rifle

in a warm and welcoming atmosphere. Participants were able to engage in various activities, including exciting archery sessions, scenic trail hikes, and small bore rifle practice. For those interested in connecting with nature on a deeper level, workshops on basic camping skills were also offered, along with many other exciting options.

This gathering not only encouraged learning and adventure but also fostered a strong sense of community among women passionate about the great outdoors.

The menu of optional outdoor events is revised each year, and many women return to participate year after year.



## SUPPORT OUR BUSINESS SPONSORS



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(Contact Melissa Doepke at  
**melissadoepke@gmail.com**  
for details.)

## Chapter Calendar As Of July 2026

Check Our Calendar On Our Website at [FW-IWLA.ORG](http://FW-IWLA.ORG)  
for Most Current Listing of Calendar Dates.

| Date       | Start time | End time | Subject                                 |
|------------|------------|----------|---|
| 7/18/2026  | 9:00 AM    | 11:00 AM | Ladies Introductory Rifle Class         |
| 7/18/2026  | 8:00 AM    | 1:00 PM  | 3D Archery Competition (Open to Public) |
| 8/1/2026   | 9:00 AM    | 11:00 AM | NSSF - Introductory Shot Gun Class      |
| 8/8/2026   | 9:00 AM    | 1:00 PM  | Jake's Day for Young Shooters           |
| 8/8/2026   | 10:30 AM   | 2:00 PM  | R&P CLOSED until 2:00pm                 |
| 8/15/2026  | 8:00 AM    | 1:00 PM  | 3D Archery Competition (Open to Public) |
| 8/20/2026  | 6:00 PM    | 8:00 PM  | Ladies - Pistol                         |
| 9/19/2026  | 8:00 AM    | 1:00 PM  | 3D Archery Competition (Open to Public) |
| 9/25/2026  | 6:00 PM    | 7:30 PM  | Fall Member Meeting                     |
| 9/26/2026  | 3:00 PM    | 7:00 PM  | Fishing Derby                           |
| 10/3/2026  | 9:00 AM    | 11:00 AM | Fall Rimfire Competition                |
| 10/3/2026  | 10:00 AM   | 2:00 PM  | Member Volunteer Work Day - Cookout!    |
| 10/10/2026 | 9:00 AM    | 11:00 AM | KYL Championship                        |
| 11/14/2026 | 9:00 AM    | 11:00 AM | RSO Refresher                           |

## 2026 Izaak Walton Spring Rimfire Championship was a Nail Biter

The 2026 Spring Rimfire Championship was different from previous events in that contestants used new IBS approved targets for both the 50-yard and 100-yard events. The new 50-yard target has reduced the center bullseye ring by 50 percent over the previous target system.

This year's final three in the Shootout were current reigning champion Todd Chiddister, John Legg and a new challenger, Brian Lang made it into the finals. For the first time, each competitor used the Bergara B14r as their rifle of choice. Previous competitions have seen the Tika - T1 and CZ457 also popular, but the Spanish made precision rifle has gained a large following the at Izzak Walton range in recent years.

The "Final Three" started at the 50-yard lanes with Todd Chiddister shooting a club record 245, John Legg shooting a 243 and newcomer Brian Lang shooting a 239. Wind speed at the beginning of the match was under 3mph.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> phase of the championship was held at the 100-yards lanes with competitors shooting the new IBS "Red" score cards which features 25 individual circles. Each circle had a maximum potential score of 10 points with a total potential score of 250, the same as the new 50-yards target. Combining the scores from both targets determines the champion.

Scores at the 100-yard lanes were John Legg 232, Todd Chiddister 231 and Brian Lang 225.

When this final round was over, the total scores were combined to determine the 2026 Spring Champion, and it was a narrow victory for Todd Chiddister with a combined score of 476/ 14X with John Legg in second with a 475/14X and Brian Lang with a 464/7X.

When the smoke cleared, Todd had won his second Rim Fire crown. CONGRATULATIONS!

## MISS THESE AND YOU MISS A LOT!

### JAKES Event August 8th, 2026

Registration opens at 8:00 am  
Event begins at 8:30am

Join us for a FREE day of fun  
and activities!



#### GET YOUR INFO IN TODAY!

Event size is limited. Pre-registration only.  
Sorry, no walk-in registrations will be accepted  
the day of event.

#### National Wild Turkey Federation

The National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTf) is a non-profit conservation and education organization founded in 1973. The NWTf is the leader in upland wildlife habitat conservation in North America, dedicated to the conservation of the wild turkey and the preservation of our hunting heritage.

### 16<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL JAKES Event For youth ages 7-17

National Wild Turkey  
Federation  
Three Rivers Chapter



Hosted by  
Izaak Walton League of America



WHEN:

Aug. 8th, 2026

WHERE:

IZAAK WALTON LEAGUE OF AMERICA  
17100 GRIFFIN RD.  
HUNTERTOWN, IN 46748

#### JAKES 2026

Registration / Release Form below may be filled out or [CLICK HERE](#) for a Google Form. Parent Or Guardian Must Submit a Release For Each Child.

Youth Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent / Legal Guardian's Name

(print): \_\_\_\_\_ Ph#: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent / Legal Guardian must attend

#### Release of Liability & Photo Release (please sign below)

As parent/legal guardian/Big Brother/Sister of the child listed above, I certify that said child has my permission to attend and participate in all activities on **August 8th, 2026** at the Izaak Walton League of America, Huntertown, IN property, sponsored by the Three Rivers Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation. By signing this form, I hereby waive and release all other participants, the host, sponsors and all other officials or parents involved in the event from all claims and/or damage incurred in connection with this event. I also hereby grant the sponsor and co-sponsors the unconditional right to use the name, voice, and photographic likeness of the above said child, in connection with any of the articles, press releases, and audio/video productions

Signature of Parent or Legal Guardian: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_ Sign me up for the JAKES

(limited to the first 50 kids)



**“What would a blind man give to see pleasant rivers , meadows, flowers, and many others that we enjoy?”**

**IZAAK WALTON**

Are you taking advantage of your membership and the opportunity to create family memories in the Outdoors, that will never be forgotten?