

What Participating in the Shooting Sports Means to Me By Megan Padden

A Browning Ladies Gold Sporting Clays, with a barrel length of 28 inches. It weights just over 7 pounds, but this gun has had one of the greatest affects on my life. If you look in the Browning catalog, the description of my gun is: “Designed with smaller overall dimensions with input from top female shooters, Ported barrel, Chrome chamber, Front HiViz® Tri-Comp sight and center sight bead” When I read this, I never thought about how this shotgun could change my view on life so much.

Shooting with the 4-H Scholastic Clay Target Program (SCTP) has been one of the most rewarding experiences of my life. It’s not just having the highest score for your squad, which I’ll tell you doesn’t always happen (we all have shooter’s slumps). It’s about having fun with your friends and learning. 4-H Shooting Sports has taught me a lot. This program has given me the self-confidence to shoot in front of people – shooting good or shooting poorly. Which before learning to shoot, I didn’t have that sort of confidence.

Sometimes, it is very hard to be a girl in a predominantly “Man’s Sport”. At times, you get talked down to in sporting goods stores. One day my mother and I were in a sporting goods store, looking at and discussing how expensive the Non-Toxic Shotgun shells were. The clerk came up to us and said “Believe me, you don’t want to buy *that* kind of

shell. They're much too expensive". When we told him (nicely) that we were just looking at the box and that we both had 12-gauge shotguns, this nice man was very surprised, and was apologetic for being rude. It isn't often that a clerk says he is sorry. They usually just look at us funny, and then talk to a man who is next to us. Having and using the confidence that 4-H has taught me, I am able to look past this kind of thing and laugh!

4-H has also taught me about our Constitutional rights as shooters, which right now, as much as ever, is extremely important. We all have the right to keep and bear arms, and that is one right that I never want to lose. I don't think I could go every Saturday morning without shooting a round of trap!

4-H Shooting Sports has gone beyond teaching me about shooting. It has given me the wonderful opportunity to become a 4-H Shooting Sports Teen Instructor. Last Spring, my family and I went to three day training, where we learned the basics on working with and teaching new shotgun shooters and on how the 4-H Shooting Sports Program runs. It was a very rewarding experience and I have found I very much like to teach new shooters, young and old.

For me, it's hard to comprehend that some pieces of wood and a bunch of metal parts, combined into a single object, could change my life so greatly. It has affected so many different areas of my life. I am much closer to my family; all those weekends of shooting at our cabin, all the boxes of clay targets and cases of shells, have really

brought us all closer together. I love to shoot with my Grandfather and my parents. The 4-H shooting sports program is truly a wonderful program.