



July 3, 2021

### **Youth Field Trial Alliance: History and Objectives**

Youth Field Trial Alliance was launched in the summer of 2019 with the objective of establishing a national organization to support youth field trials across the country. Our first goal was to create a professional website – a go-to place for reliable information about youth field trials and a resource for those interested in hosting youth programs. We first used the power of social media building a YFTA Facebook page to advertise, and help raise funds for the development of the website. We also approached individual companies and organizations in our fundraising effort. Later we launched the now popular Strideaway Group on Facebook, celebrating both field trial sports' history and youth field trials.

Field trial clubs across the country have hosted youth trials and training events over the past few decades, some for many years. As we all know, putting on a field trial is hard work and time-consuming – so often it's a dedicated few club members who do all the work. It's easy to understand where one more thing seems like just too much. So often additional programs are voted out when participation or help are waning. Clubs in Alabama, with Darron Henley and a few other individuals at the helm have defied this pattern, hosting youth field trials for nearly a half decade. We tend to focus on our own field trial involvement which for many amateurs is regional. I was unaware of Alabama's long history of hosting youth field trials until I moved to southwest Georgia. In the last few years, clubs here in Georgia have followed Alabama's example, regularly hosting youth trials. The Dixie Trace FTA launched a youth scholarship program in 2019.

Effectively highlighting these successes and positive developments via social media and our website informs the field trial community and adds a positive note about where our sport is headed – especially during the difficult last year. YFTA's aim is to inspire field trialers across the country to initiate long-term youth programs.

YFTA encourages field trialers to hold any kind of youth program that works for their club and the ages of their kids. This includes both walking and horseback trials. These non-sanctioned trials can evolve over time and as young handlers gain confidence and experience. Getting kids involved early in their lives is critical. The older they get the more competition from the many school sports they have opportunities to compete in with their friends. We want them to get hooked on bird dogs, horses, game birds and the great outdoors first! The ongoing promotion of youth field trials is helping in that effort as well as introducing field trials and youth field trials to an entirely new audience. Everyone has concerns about childrens' increasing absorption in social media and cell phone addiction.

### **A Strideaway Project**

## **Accomplishments**

- Creation of social media page to support and connect field trialers and other individuals interested in hosting youth trials. Added the Facebook Strideaway Group specifically to share history of field trials, posts from the YFTA page and a place where members can themselves post and comment on youth field trials.
- Designed logo, produced educational handout materials (brochure) and YFTA caps.
- Designed portable booth display (Purina tent) for 2019 Kevin's Southern Game Fair in Thomasville, GA. Banners, placards produced will be used at other game fairs to promote our sport and youth field trials.
- Organized and put on Youth Pointing Dog Demo at the Southern Game Fair. Raised financial contributions from area professional handlers and other field trialers to purchase gifts for demo participants.
- Successful fundraising effort to raise money for the design and development of YFTA website. ([www.yfta.strideaway.com](http://www.yfta.strideaway.com))
- Designed, wrote copy, enlisted others to write breed descriptions for website pages that describe popular field trial breeds, basic field trial history and field trial basics for people entirely new to the sport.
- Regular website updates to Events and News pages. Wrote posts to communicate, inspire and grow interest in youth field trials throughout the country. Shared Events and News posts to social media.
- Promoted, attended, photographed, video-taped and did podcast interviews with youth handlers at:
  - 2019 GA/FL Youth Trial (Tallahassee, FL)
  - 2019 Southern FTC's Youth Trial (Blakely, GA)
  - 2020 Sedgefields Youth Trial (Union Springs, AL)
  - 2020 Turkey Creek Youth Trial (Morven Park, GA)
  - 2020 Youth Handler Training Days (Mays Pond, FL)
  - 2020 Dixie Trace FTA Meeting (Albany, GA)
  - 2021 GA/FL Youth Trial (Tallahassee, FL)
  - 2021 Blackbelt Youth Trial (Ochlocknee, GA)
  - 2021 Alabama Youth Field Trial Assoc. Youth Training Seminar
- Post production. Published photos, videos, podcasts, reports from youth trials on our News page and widely shared and circulated on Social Media.
- Designed and purchased YFTA high quality outdoor decals, handed them out and sent them to youth trials.
- Wrote and submitted magazine articles with photos from youth trials to:
  - 2019 Shotgun Life
  - 2019 Kevin's Catalog (blog story)
  - 2020 Field Trial Review
  - 2020 May/June issue of Pointing Dog Journal
  - 2020 winter issue of Southwest Georgia Living (12 pages)
  - 2021 Field Trial Review
- Interviewed by Durrell Smith/Gundog Notebook for a podcast episode on youth trials.
- Promoted the AFTCA's pre-membership program and Standards booklet (given to youth field trial winners).
- Organized additional online fundraisers, i.e. Patty's Chaps Raffle.
- Purchased 8 x 10 photo prints with trial info for youth field trials winners.
- Aided field trialers in other parts of the country hosting their first youth stakes.

## **Youth Field Trial Alliance • A Strideaway Project**

## 2021-22 Objectives

- Actively promote walking youth trials and training days for youth handlers who either prefer to walk or have no access to horses or a desire to ride. This leads to a much easier effort to recruit new youths to the field trial sport whose entry should not be limited by the necessity of a horse.
- Design and send monthly emails "Tips from the Pros" with short training and handling tips from professional and long-time successful amateurs in both horseback and walking trials. This indicates to youth handlers that they are taken seriously in the field trial world. It also presents an easy opportunity for busy pros/amateurs to show their support of youth field trials and young handlers.
- 2021 Kevin's 5th Annual Southern Game Fair in Thomasville, GA. Organize and put on the second youth handlers demonstration of bird dog training to a large and diverse audience of sporting life enthusiasts. Several youth handlers will participate in the demonstration. We will have rehearsals over late summer and fall for the November event.
- Attend more game fairs (i.e. Orvis) introducing upland bird hunters, conservation groups and other attendees to youth field trials.
- Research and reach out to organizations (for example: National Shooting Sports Foundation) to discover youth programs in conservation, etc. to create a network of these opportunities for kids.
- Write feature story (submit with photos) for fall issue of international biannual publication "Hunting Dog Confidential".
- Reach out to more media outlets to publish stories and articles/podcasts about youth field trials.
- Continue to maintain YFTA website Events and News pages and social media pages with relevant content throughout the year to increase traffic, awareness etc.
- Promote youth stakes as permanent additions to clubs' field trial slate of events.
- Actively promote training days and seminars for youth handlers to further involve the field trial community.
- Actively promote youth handlers attendance at major circuit field trials around the country by inviting them and their families to attend and accompany them to answer questions.
- Promote AFTCA pre-membership program and Standards booklet. As kids graduate to competing in sanctioned trials, they will likely remain AFTCA members and be well versed in field trial procedure etc.
- Find creative ways to promote other important aspects of field trialing, good sportsmanship etc.



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Strideaway

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