



Photos by Maj. Jennifer Hinson, Colorado Wing

CAP has a champion shooter in Colorado

By Kristi Carr

Guns — such as this rifle — require precise aiming, advises super shooter Cadet Capt. Tanis Hinson of CAP's Air Academy Cadet Squadron in Colorado Springs, Colo.

“It wasn’t until people started getting upset with me — even backing out of competitions if I was in them — that I realized I was really good,” said Cadet Capt. Tanis Hinson, a member of Civil Air Patrol’s Air Academy Cadet Squadron in Colorado Springs, Colo.

Hinson, 19, is an accomplished shooter who has excelled in many related sports, including archery, trapshooting and rifle competitions. Her awards include a 2007 gold medal for the qualifying events for the Scholastic Clay Targets Program, or SCTP, in the Colorado Junior Olympics; a silver medal for trapshooting in the 2007 State Games of America; three years as Colorado’s champion trapshooter

for her division; and two years as the Wyoming out-of-state champion for trapshooting, also for her division. In addition, she was participating in trials for the 2008 Beijing Olympics until a heavy college study load got in her way.

SHOOTING DOWN DISAPPOINTMENTS

The cadet program and her sports have been a dual influence on Hinson, often balancing one another. When other shooting competitors were put off by her age, gender and talent, CAP offered her leadership roles. Conversely, when, despite her best efforts, she was not admitted to the U.S. Air Force Academy, her shooting abilities

opened doors for her to teach archery to elementary and high school students.

“CAP really helped me learn patience,” she noted, “and that’s a useful skill for shooters. Practice is important in this sport; use it or lose it. And especially for trapshooting, patience is key to bringing down a moving clay target.”

Patience and perseverance also have been important to her in teaching others how to shoot. Several of her students are in special education programs. “I’ve found I love being a teacher and explaining how to shoot,” said Hinson.

“Integrity is another trait I learned from CAP,” she added. “Integrity comes into play in trap-

shooting competition when the onus can be on the shooter to decide whether or not a target is broken, entitling the shooter to another shot. I've been faced with competitors who call a target broken when it isn't."

TARGETING FUN, KNOWLEDGE AND SAFETY

While the sheer fun of shooting is a major draw for Hinson, she also feels strongly that everyone should have an understanding of and appreciation for guns. "The more people know how to shoot, the fewer accidents there will be," she said, adding, "Everybody should know how to use a gun."

She has even ventured into the business of inventing shooting equipment. When the SCTP changed its rules a few years ago to prohibit its young shooters from using the toe of their shoe as a resting place for their gun barrel, Hinson could see how some of the smaller competitors struggled to hold their guns for the usual round of 100 shots. In response, she created a barrel saver pad, a leather pad that rests on the ground but has a braided strap connecting it to the shooter's belt. Her design is an



Hinson stands with her shotgun and trophies won in various shooting competitions.

Achieving the cadet program's Amelia Earhart Award, presented by former Colorado Wing Commander Col. Greg Cortum, earned Hinson consideration for the International Air Cadet



Exchange, which she attended in Canada last summer.

improvement over magnetic foam pads that can be left behind or cause distraction if brought up with the gun as it is being aimed.

AIMING AT THE FUTURE

Both CAP and shooting have given Hinson confidence. She chose

an online college, American Public University, as a fast track to a college degree but decided to transfer to Norwich University next fall to be active in the school's Corps of Cadets, hone her search and rescue skills with the Mountain Cold Weather Rescue group and develop a collegiate shooting team or club. After earning a bachelor's degree in civil engineering, she hopes to commission into the U.S. Air Force and pursue a master's degree in emergency and disaster management with American Public University, which will allow her to work disasters and emergencies as they occur within and outside the Air Force.

Participation in the Olympics is still a possibility, too. For two years, she's been working with Lloyd Woodhouse, the four-time Olympic shotgun coach from Colorado Springs

who has trained several gold medal winners. "I think a lot of that young lady," he said. "She's doing well at so many things. She is a well-rounded individual."

Woodhouse, who recently retired as a shotgun coach for the USA Olympics shooting team, predicts Hinson will be an elite American trapshooter. "I know she loves it," he said. "She is certainly a rising star across the board." ▲