



FAMILIES AFIELD CHECKLIST FOR SUCCESS

If you want to help reverse the trend of declining percentage of hunters and want to remove the barriers that prevent young people from experiencing hunting with their families, now is the time to see how you can make a difference through the Families Afield program.

Leaders at the National Shooting Sports Foundation (NSSF), National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTf) and U.S. Sportsmen's Alliance (USSA) developed Families Afield out of their concern about laws that prevent young people from hunting with an adult mentor. Families Afield is an education and outreach program to help states eliminate unnecessary barriers into youth hunting. Working with elected officials, wildlife agency personnel, sportsmen and the general public, the founders share a vision of creating opportunities for youth, and helping families experience the safe, wholesome enjoyment of the sporting traditions.

CHECKLIST FOR IMPLEMENTING FAMILIES AFIELD

Removing barriers that hamper efforts to recruit new hunters is a process that involves planning, collaboration and persistence in working through the legislative or regulatory process.

Do your homework

- ❑ Inform the National Shooting Sports Foundation (NSSF), the National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTf) and/or the U.S. Sportsmen's Alliance (USSA) that you're interested in working to eliminate barriers to youth hunting. Getting these organizations involved at the earliest point greatly increases your chance for success. These organizations will be with you every step of the way – helping plan and implement your Families Afield campaign, providing guidance, coordinating efforts of other sportsmen's groups, the wildlife agency and legislators as well as providing

comprehensive support for media and public relations.

- ❑ Request the following materials to familiarize yourself with the Family Afield program.
 - Youth Hunting Report
 - Families Afield Model Legislation
 - Families Afield video
 - Visit the Families Afield Web site at www.familiesafield.org

Talk to the right people

- ❑ Be prepared for the fact that most Families Afield work will be done behind the scenes before legislation is introduced. This planning time is important to educate and inform sportsmen's groups and others with a vested interest about Families Afield. Some people don't know that young people hunting with an adult mentor are the safest afield. It's our job to help

them understand that Families Afield legislation/regulations can improve hunter recruitment without sacrificing safety.

- ❑ The USSA, NWTf and NSSF will work with you to build support with the following key groups:
 - Other sportsmen's groups. Creating a coalition of likeminded sportsmen's groups will enhance the clout your issue will have with state legislators.
 - Hunter education instructors.
 - Wildlife agency staff. The support and cooperation of the wildlife agency can be an important element of your success.
 - Outdoors writers (associations).
 - State legislators who are members of the National Assembly of Sportsmen's Caucuses.

Hold Your First Meeting

- ❑ First things first...build your coalition with sportsmen's groups.
 - Plan an initial meeting. Develop an agenda so you can stick to business and conduct an efficient, effective meeting. Contact USSA, NWTf or NSSF. They may be able to send a staff person to your first meeting to help.
 - Invite only those groups who you feel are likely to embrace your goals. Make sure your invitation provides a specific time, place and date for the meeting. Try to persuade at least one invitee before the meeting to support the endeavor. They will be able to chime in to support your position if necessary.
 - At the first meeting, help meeting participants understand Families Afield by showing the program video.
 - Discuss the need and importance of the program.
 - Pass out and review materials such as the Youth Hunting Report and Families Afield Model Legislation.
 - Discuss what changes need to be made to remove barriers for new hunters. Remember, the goal is to



let parents and not the government decide when their sons and daughters are ready to try hunting. And the more restrictions built into laws and regulations, the less effective your recruitment efforts will be.

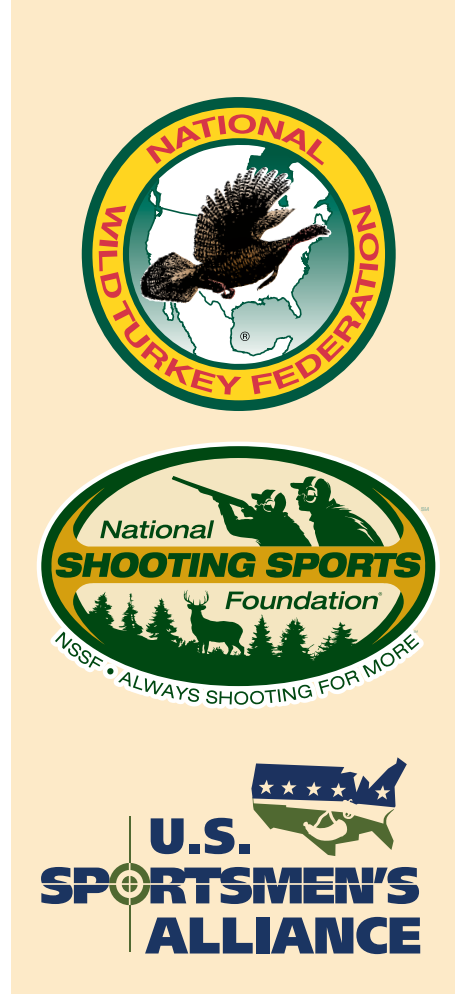
- Discuss the best way to accomplish your goals. Can you remove barriers through the regulatory process or the legislative process?

Make a plan

- ❑ The first step in creating your blueprint for success is involving USSA, NWTF or NSSF. They will help you develop a plan and work with you to tackle the following tasks.
 - Make an appointment with the wildlife agency to introduce the concept and intended goals of Families Afield. Try to involve key people within the agency including the director, hunter education administrator, and department heads overseeing law enforcement, wildlife, and public affairs.
 - Contact the state hunter education association and ask to meet with them. Attend the meeting prepared to show the Families Afield video to introduce the concept and intended goals of Families Afield.
 - Set up a meeting with your state wildlife law enforcement officer association to introduce Families Afield.
 - Plan to attend an event of National Assembly of Sportsmen's Caucuses members in your state.
 - Take another look to ensure you haven't missed any important partners in building your Families Afield coalition.
 - Create talking points based on the Families Afield Model legislation that will help you explain your goals in a way that's effective and persuasive when attending the various meetings.

Work behind the scenes

- ❑ Funding the effort. NSSF, NWTF and USSA have funds available to support your efforts. However, it will be important to get additional partners to



participate to defray some of the costs.

- ❑ Hiring lobbyists – USSA, NWTF and NSSF staff will work with you to determine if a lobbyist is necessary. If a lobbyist is needed, the Families Afield partners will identify the right person to represent you before legislators.
- ❑ Exploring someone to introduce the bill – Together we will work with the lobbyist to identify who is the best person to author the bill.

Develop a PR/Media strategy

- ❑ Once a bill is introduced, a well thought out media plan can mean the difference between success and failure. USSA, NWTF and NSSF will help you put together a plan based on the following principles:
 - ❑ Timing is everything when it comes to engaging the media to tell the Families Afield story. Break the story too soon (before a bill is introduced) and you can wind up with negative press. Break the story too late, and your point of view could get overlooked.
 - ❑ Providing information to educate both outdoor writers and mainstream writers is also critical to success.

- ❑ Fortunately, you've got the support of three national partners to help you negotiate these waters. NSSF, NWTF and USSA are checking the calendar for upcoming state, regional and national outdoor communicators conferences where they can present general concepts about Families Afield.
- ❑ If you're pursuing legislation to remove barriers, it's critical that you stay on top of the process and report progress to the partners as soon as possible. The optimum time to release a story about the intent to pursue Families Afield legislation is the day the bill is introduced. Advance notice of bill introduction will allow NWTF, NSSF or USSA to prepare news releases for state and national distribution.
- ❑ The job of getting positive media coverage of Families Afield won't get done with just a press release. There are many different ways and places to tell the story that need your local touch. Each time the bill takes another step through the legislative process is an opportunity to capitalize on the news value. Remember, timing is critical. Here are some ways you can get started developing your media savvy.

- Develop a list of media contacts. Watch the local news and outdoor television shows, listen to radio stations and spend time scanning target magazines, newsletters, Web sites and newspapers. Identify those writers/editors/reporters/producers who show an interest in the outdoors. Build a file of all friendly communicators you find and include their names, addresses, telephone numbers and email addresses.
- Practice pitching your story before you contact the media. Develop short, concise soundbites to describe the Families Afield program, why it's needed and the benefits.
- Develop a personal relationship with your media contacts. Invite them to lunch. Be friendly and persistent about pitching your story. Ask them when it's best for you to call them.



What part of the day do they have time to discuss your story? What are their needs? Keep them informed about what's happening.

- Understand that outdoor communicators are different than mainstream media reporters. Outdoor writers tend to be better informed about hunting and hunting issues. However, do not assume they share your desire to uphold our hunting heritage by removing barriers that restrict youth hunting. Some of them haven't been educated yet on the facts!
- Mainstream media are likely to misrepresent the issue because they either know virtually nothing about sporting arms and hunting or they have a bias against guns and hunting. They may need basic information to help tell the story.
- Realize there are many places we can tell our story and don't be afraid to knock on doors including:
 - TV: News, local talk shows, outdoor television shows.
 - Newspapers: local or state news sections, letters to the editor, guest columns, sports/outdoor section.
 - Web sites: Electronic newsletters, alerts on message boards, articles on Web pages
 - Radio: News, talk shows, outdoor radio programs.
 - Magazine/association newsletters: state and/or regional publications, newsletters produced by companies, government agencies, nonprofit organizations, etc.
- Make it easy for the media to tell the Families Afield story. Share with them media tools such as photos, video, logos and fact sheets and more, which are available at www.familiesafield.org. Learn what those tools are and how you can best use them.
- Know how to handle the media if they call you.
 - If someone from the media leaves you a message, return their phone call immediately or you could miss a big opportunity.
 - If they want information, photographs, etc., follow up on their request with a sense of

urgency and win a media friend for life.

- If you send, email or fax something, call to make sure it was received. You can't rely on technology. Plus a follow up phone call give the reporter another opportunity to ask for more information.
- If the reporter wants to do an interview, ask him or her a few questions before you get started to help you prepare. Do a pre-interview to find out:
 - ✓ What you'll be interviewed about/slant of the story.
 - ✓ Expected length of the interview.
 - ✓ Where and when the interview will be used.
 - ✓ Who else has been interviewed?

- If you don't know the answer to a question, it's OK to let reporters know that. Then reassure them you'll get the information they need or put them in touch with someone who can BEFORE their deadline.
- Interpret complicated information for reporters who aren't experts in words that even a novice can understand. Show you're the person who can help the reporter with complex information.
- Don't give reporters too much information, facts and/or figures. Don't make someone without a lot of knowledge sort through tons of information. They may not get the story right.
- Develop a central theme for your interview and practice delivering



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- ✓ What is the deadline?
- ✓ What does the reporter know about the topic (level of expertise)?
- If you need time to gather information, ask the reporter if you can call him or her back. Agree on a time to return the phone call and then be sure you follow up.
- Be sure of the facts you share with a reporter. If reporters catch you in a lie, they'll never trust you again. The reporter will also tell colleagues, and your reputation as an untrustworthy source will spread quickly.
- Never say "no comment" to a reporter because they are likely to assume you're hiding something. If you are asked a question you don't know how to answer, let the reporter know that. Then reassure the reporter you'll get them the information they need or put them in touch with someone who can help them BEFORE their deadline.

it in a 10-second soundbite. During the interview, repeat this "central theme" at every opportunity.

- If the reporter runs a positive story, make sure you send them an extra special thank you.

The Last Step

- Becoming involved in a Families Afield campaign is a great way to give something back to the future of conservation and hunting. If you're successful, the above plan will yield the last step in this effort, which is preparing for the ceremonial bill signing by the governor. The partners will help make the most of your victory, and we hope you'll make the most of your new law or regulation, by introducing a young person to hunting.

