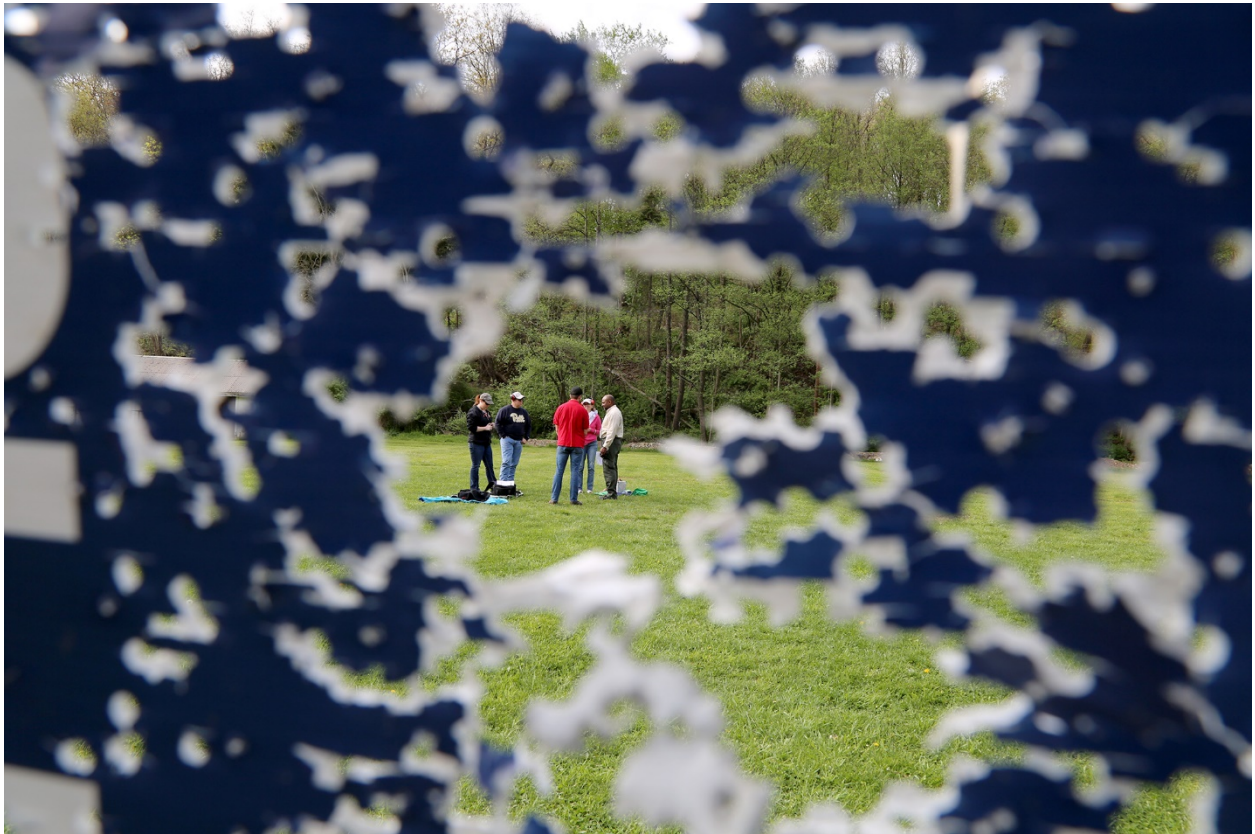


# BC3's NRA course helps participants aiming for better accuracy

"I saw a difference immediately," student says of one-on-one instruction

May 31, 2018



Michael Pearson, right, a training sergeant with Butler County Community College's campus police and a former member of military special operations, instructs BC3's NRA basic pistol shooting course May 11 at the Litman Range Facility in Butler Township.

(Butler, PA) Instructor Michael Pearson's corrections to their unrecognized habits when missing 4-inch targets with their .22-caliber and 9mm semi-automatic handguns produced groupings of rounds piercing those circles 10 feet distant, said students in the first of six NRA basic pistol shooting courses scheduled in 2018 by Butler County Community College.

The 16-hour course for civilians, offered through BC3's Public Safety Training, highlights the five fundamentals of pistol shooting, the three NRA rules of safe firearms handling, the proper two-handed grip, determining your dominant eye, marksmanship and shooting techniques. The course, designed as either a two- or three-session class, will be held monthly through October and comes as sheriffs in regional counties report a spike in license-to-carry permits.

"We've seen an increase," said Michael Slupe, Butler County sheriff, adding that the number of permits in his jurisdiction rose from 5,800 in 2015 to 8,000 in 2017.

"It's on the rise," added Perry Quahliero, Lawrence County sheriff.

Roni Shilling, the sheriff in Mercer County, said her office has seen a surge of "about 500 applications a year since 2015."

The number of permit holders nationwide in 2016 grew by a record 1.83 million, topping the previous record increase of 1.73 million set in 2015, according to the Crime and Research Center, a nonprofit organization that, among other initiatives, conducts academic research on the relationship between laws regulating the ownership or use of guns, crime and public safety.

Approximately 1.3 million Pennsylvanians held concealed carry permits as of March 2017, a number second only to Florida's 1.8 million, according the Crime Prevention Research Center.



Michael Pearson, center, is a training sergeant with Butler County Community College's campus police and a former member of military special operations. He is shown instructing Darlene Span-Trostle, left, of Cranberry Township, during BC3's NRA basic pistol shooting course May 11 at the Litman Range Facility in Butler Township. At right is Tim Lowry, of McKees Rocks.



Tim Lowry, of McKees Rocks, a student in Butler County Community College's NRA basic pistol shooting course, prepares to place a round into his magazine May 11 at the Litman Range Facility in Butler Township.



Sheriff Carl J. Gotwald Sr., of Jefferson County, said his office is “seeing a rise in the number of women (seeking permits), with the way things are going in the world today. People think they need to protect themselves. Some husbands think their wives should have a permit.”

Bill Rupert, the sheriff in Armstrong County who also has witnessed an increase in the number of handgun permits in his jurisdiction over the past five years, added: “The number of women interested is on the rise because they want to protect themselves.”

Protection, said Darlene Span-Trostle, a Cranberry Township participant in BC3’s May course, was one of two reasons she enrolled, along with her belief that “everyone should know about gun shooting safety and basics.”

“Know your handgun,” Slupe said. “Know the laws about your handgun, how to clean your handgun and the safe operating practices of your handgun.”



A shell casing ejects from the .22-caliber Smith & Wesson handgun fired by Darlene Span-Trostle, of Cranberry Township, during BC3’s NRA basic pistol shooting course May 11 at the Litman Range Facility in Butler Township.

## Scores soar from personalized attention

Span-Trostle had fired a handgun only several times before aiming at targets at the Litman Range Facility in Butler Township on May 11 as part of BC3’s NRA basic pistol shooting course. She said her knowledge of handgun safety improved from a 2 to an 8 on a 10-point scale; and of a handgun’s parts, and of her comfort level with a pistol, from 0s to 7s.

Her accuracy, she said, soared from a 0 to an 8, due to Pearson’s recognition of how her breathing and ergonomics initially had her missing the 4-inch circles only high and low, but not left and right, with her .22-caliber Smith & Wesson handgun.

Rather than holding her breath as she pulled the trigger, she would inhale, causing her to fire high of the target; or exhale, causing her to miss low. And her chin was too low as she squeezed the trigger.

“The first several times I shot Mike was with somebody else. Then he came over,” Span-Trostle said, “and he picked it up right away. I needed the instruction he was able to provide. He is very good.”

That personalized attention from Pearson – a training sergeant with BC3’s campus police and a former member of military special operations – also resulted in his noticing that Tim Lowry’s misplaced left index finger on his grip was causing the McKees Rocks resident’s rounds to miss high and left.



A shell casing ejects from the Springfield Armory X-DE 9mm handgun fired by Tim Lowry, of McKees Rocks, during Butler County Community College’s NRA basic pistol shooting course May 11 at the Litman Range Facility in Butler Township.

“The one-on-one with Mike is that he was able to focus on me,” said Lowry, who added that his accuracy with a Springfield Armory X-DE 9mm improved from a 5 to an 8 as a result of Pearson’s insight. “He wasn’t looking at the target. He was watching me shoot. My foot placement. My shoulders. It was everything about your ergonomics.

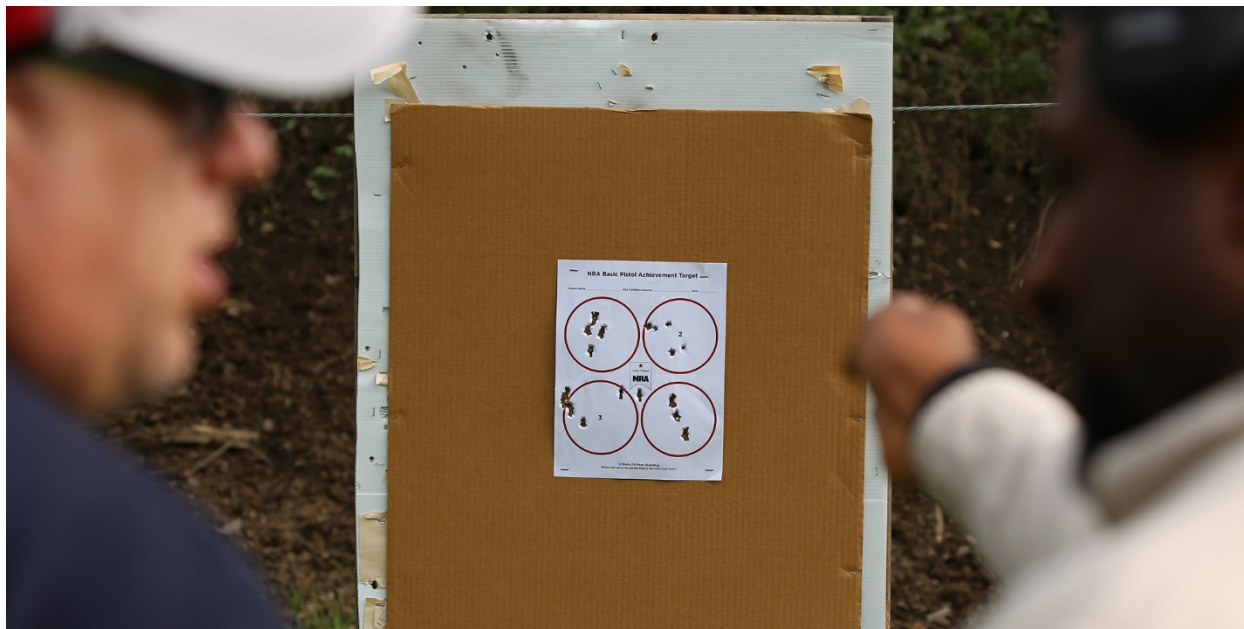
“He would say, ‘Move that finger down off the trigger guard on top of your other hand. You are going to see a difference.’”

Lowry “didn’t even realize he was doing that,” Pearson said. “He had no idea.”

“And so I did,” Lowry said. “Immediately. I moved it. I saw a difference immediately.”

Pearson has been a certified NRA instructor for six years and was a firearms and tactics instructor while serving in the Air Force.

“When you are dealing with a one-on-one or a two-on-one type situation in the class,” Pearson said, “people are more likely to ask you a question or tell you where they are having difficulty.”



Michael Pearson, right, is a training sergeant with Butler County Community College's campus police and a former member of military special operations. He is shown instructing Tim Lowry, of McKees Rocks, after Lowry's initial practice round during BC3's NRA basic pistol shooting course May 11 at the Litman Range Facility in Butler Township.

## 96% of students earn NRA marksmanship certificate

To receive an NRA certificate of course completion, students must demonstrate the knowledge, skills and attitude necessary for the safe and proficient use of a pistol, and pass the qualification shooting standard at a Level 1. That means placing five shots in a grouping inside four different 4-inch circles at 10 feet.

Seventy-three of 76 students taking BC3's NRA basic pistol shooting courses since May 2017 have passed the marksmanship test, Pearson said.

Participants must be at least 21 years old and supply their own pistol, holster or case, and ammunition, which is limited to first-run factory bullets.

BC3's NRA basic pistol shooting courses will be offered in June, July and September in three sessions; and in August and October in two sessions.

Times and dates of the courses are:

June: 5:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m., June 19 and June 21, Room 106, Science and Technology Building, BC3's main campus, Butler Township; and 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. June 23, Litman Range Facility, Butler Township.

July: 5:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m., July 17 and July 19, Room 106, Science and Technology Building, BC3's main campus, Butler Township; and 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. July 21, Litman Range Facility, Butler Township.

August: 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Aug. 24, Room 106, Science and Technology Building, BC3's main campus, Butler Township; and 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Aug. 25, Litman Range Facility, Butler Township.

September: 5:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m., Sept. 18 and Sept. 20, Room 106, Science and Technology Building, BC3's main campus, Butler Township; and 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Sept. 22, Litman Range Facility, Butler Township.

October: 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Oct. 12, Room 106, Science and Technology Building, BC3's main campus, Butler Township; and 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Oct. 13, Litman Range Facility, Butler Township.

BC3's NRA basic pistol shooting course costs \$112, which includes a \$2 registration fee.

For more information, visit [bc3.edu/firearms-training](http://bc3.edu/firearms-training) or call (724) 287-8711 Ext. 8418.