

Mitigating Gun Violence Through Community Involvement

In the wake of recent incidents of gun violence in Valdosta, a collaborative effort between the Valdosta Police Department, Moody Air Force Base, Little River Sportsman Association, and Mayor Scott James Matheson is underway to develop a unique program aimed at eliminating gun violence through education and engagement.

The program, known as Venatic Instruction, takes inspiration from martial arts grading systems, offering boys in Valdosta a structured pathway to learn about Gun Awareness, Gun Maintenance, Target Shooting, and Proficiency. Similar to earning martial arts belts, participants progress through levels of certification, starting from basic understanding to advanced proficiency.

Boys enrolled in the Venatic Instruction program will attend a 6-week Saturday Morning Program, where they will receive comprehensive training in each area. Upon satisfactory completion of each component, participants will be awarded a certificate, signifying their mastery of the skills taught.

A distinctive feature of the program is the opportunity for graduates to fire a machine gun upon completing all classes and receiving their certificates. This hands-on experience aims to reinforce responsible gun handling practices and ensure that participants are well-versed in gun safety.

Graduates of the Venatic Instruction program will also be automatically enrolled in the Wart-Hog program, a unique initiative that offers exciting prizes to further incentivize participation. The prizes include:

- First Prize: A chance to fly in a Wart Hog.
- Second Prize: A daytime hunt of live Wart-Hog.
- Third Prize: The opportunity to dress the hog.

Additionally, all graduates of the Venatic Instruction program will be treated to a Saturday afternoon B.B.Q. (Pig & Hog roast), celebrating their achievements and fostering a sense of community among participants.

Through Venatic Instruction, Valdosta aims to not only educate its youth about responsible gun ownership but also create a culture of safety and respect for firearms. By engaging key stakeholders and offering tangible incentives, this program seeks to make a meaningful impact in reducing gun violence in the community.