

Hobart JROTC cadets become marksmen

by Rob Earnshaw

Until recently, the only shooting done by the cadets of Hobart High School's JROTC program was when they lit the Brickie cannon every time Hobart scored a touchdown during a home football game. Now, thanks to hard work, determination and inge-

nuité, the cadets can take part in marksmanship training in the renovated basement at the high school.

"The cadets designed all of it, you couldn't even tell this was a basement before," said Senior Army instructor Lt. Col. Scott Buhmann.

A contest was held between the JROTC classes to determine the design, with the freshmen coming away as winners. With Buhmann overseeing the renovation and making sure the range was meeting national specifications, the cadets executed their plan, which included the placing of protective material on the walls. They even adorned one wall with their very own JROTC logo. After six days of work with three classes working back-to-back, the range was ready for

use. First however, the cadets had to complete two weeks of safety training with the air rifles and another two weeks of practice firing from different body positions. Now they're competing for their marksmanship and sharp shooter badges. Buhmann said the purpose for the cadets to have a range is not to teach them to shoot.

"Shooting is the vehicle to teach them concentration, discipline and control," Buhmann said. "Things they can use to translate later in their lives. And it's a more interesting way to teach it rather than using words in a classroom."

Sophomore cadet Isamor Flores is in her second year of JROTC because her father wanted her to gain more discipline. Flores's father is a member of the National Guard, and he's also taken her out for shooting practice. That explains why marksmanship is one of her favorite parts of JROTC.

"It comes pretty natural for me," she said.

It's a little unnatural for fellow sophomore cadet Rebekah Roberts to wear an eye patch when she's firing a rifle, but she has a good reason - she's unable to close just one eye.

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Hobart High School JROTC cadets take part in a marksmanship class. The cadets use air rifles in a range, which they designed and built themselves. Pictured are Erick Pistello, Adam Holbrook, Nicole Kuech, Ruben Escoto, Zach Dvojacki and Rebekah Roberts.

"If I didn't wear a patch I couldn't see where I was shooting," said Roberts, who wears the patch over her left eye.

Buhmann said Roberts has gone from "being all over the place to being right on target."

"She can't wink," he said.

Now that a range is in place, the next plan of action of the JROTC is to take the 12 best cadets and form an interscholastic marksmanship team. The dozen cadets would travel throughout the country and compete in events. Buhmann also plans to take a dozen cadets on a unique one-week summer outing at Camp Atterbury in

Edinburgh. There the cadets will partake in an army obstacle course and helicopter rides.

The Hobart JROTC classes away from the range take place in a building within walking distance of the school campus at Kate Corgan Field. Assisting Buhmann in the program is Army instructor 1st. Sgt. Leo Marshall. He said it's been a good experience working with the students and he credits a lot of the success to the JROTC program to school principal David Spitzer.

"If not for him, we wouldn't be here," Marshall said.