

## Donations soar at shoot day



It's all about giving back to the community and hitting a few clay targets along the way. SSAA Shepparton's Blue Ribbon Shoot brought together 93 shooters on Saturday, October 24 for a 75-clay target competition. Over the past 11 years, the branch has hosted the event. It's attracted shooters from as far away as Echuca and Melbourne, who bring their 12-gauge shotguns along and donate thousands each year to the local health service.

SSAA member Arnold Warburton established the competition more than a decade ago because he wanted to raise money for charity, but ensure the money stayed in the local community. The first Blue Ribbon Shoot attracted dozens of competitors who all wanted to practice their sport and help other at the same time. "We got a lot of shooters that first year," he said. "After that, word got out and it just kept getting bigger and bigger."

This year's competition was hard-fought, with each divisional shooter fighting for a Blue Ribbon Shoot sash. Melbourne's Jack Gibbs won the high gun, with 67 out of a possible 75 targets shot. Shepparton District Firearms Officer Senior Constable Greg Pegg topped the police competition, with a score of 50, while in the women's competition Jane Woodhack shot 37 targets to win. In the junior division, Alex Kalogerakis came out on top.

Senior Constable Greg Pegg said the money raised through the event ensured better care was provided to sick or injured people. "Money (from the competition) and any other money that's raised by the Blue Ribbon Foundation goes towards local hospitals and is used for buying medical equipment or improving care," he said. "It goes towards a program that allows country surgeons to have face-to-face video links with experienced surgeons in Melbourne or Sydney via the internet, helping country surgeons get through difficult surgeries. We're also aiming to get a helipad on the new wing at the Shepparton Goulburn Valley Base Hospital in the next two years and that will be named after the Greater Shepparton Blue Ribbon Foundation."

The Blue Ribbon Foundation was established to commemorate Victoria Police killed in the line of duty by supporting community projects across the state. The mantra behind the foundation is, "We can do nothing to bring them back, but as a grateful community we can take steps to honour their memory and ensure their sacrifice is acknowledged through a range of projects that benefit the wider community". The Greater Shepparton Blue Ribbon Foundation branch has previously joined with the community to install the Eyre-Tynan Emergency Department and the Ray Denman Short Stay Unit new facilities at Goulburn Valley Health.

Alongside the Blue Ribbon shooting competition, punters battled it out for the major raffle prize, with the winner choosing from a Winchester Browning under and over shotgun or \$2000 worth of fishing gear from Trelly's Fishing and Hunting World. Second prize in the raffle was a \$250 prize sponsored by Tree Solutions Shepparton and third was a \$100 voucher from Market Meats Shepparton. Rhys Taylor took home the major prize.

Greater Shepparton Blue Ribbon Foundation President, Senior Constable Dean Lloyd, said any money raised through the raffle was a bonus, as the SSAA Shepparton branch ensured at least \$2000 went to the cause. Range President Geoff Morton presents a \$2000 cheque to the foundation every year on behalf of the club. "It's a charity day for us and it's a good thing to get the coppers together with the shooters for a bit of fun," Geoff said.

Senior Constable Lloyd said the Blue Ribbon Shoot competitors were always generous. "In 2014 between the raffle, merchandise trailer and SSAA donation, it was just shy of \$6000 for the day," he said. "It's a small community and they dig deep and give generously. I've been coming out here for six years now and it's a great day. There's a lot of community here."

There is a large population of sporting shooters in the Shepparton area, as is common in most country areas. "When I moved here in the early 1970s if you didn't have a gun in your cupboard or a fishing rod in your cupboard you weren't a local," Senior Constable Pegg said. "It is a way of country life to be a shooter."

This year's event raised \$6300 for the Great Shepparton Blue Ribbon Foundation.

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