

Teen balances school with aspiration to become professional female archer

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THE CRITTENDEN PRESS

Cutting class to go hunting sounds like a lot of fun, right?

In rural Kentucky, it's something that probably happens quite often. Generally, though, it's not condoned by the school.

Yet for one 16-year-old Crittenden County High School junior, missing class for hunting and shooting is perfectly acceptable.

Katie Davies is an aspiring professional hunter. She and her family have lived near Tolu for three years and they say it's a blessing that school administrators have embraced Davies' unique career path. Her father, Dan Davies, says local educators are very understanding and have helped create an environment of learning that will help his daughter in a line of work that includes holding a bow and stalking bears.

The teenage girl is an accomplished archer on the national stage. She has a long list of professional endorsements and sponsorships from manufacturers in the archery and hunting industries. Her rigorous schedule of competitive shooting events and hunting opportunities puts her on the road quite often, out of state many weekends and sometimes during the week.

School officials have been understanding, and they're helping establish an individual learning plan for Davies that will prepare her for life as a businesswoman in the largely-male-dominated hunting world.

"Instead of standing in her way, they are actually paving the way," said Davies' father, himself a well-known archer on the national circuit.

School administrators say Davies is a unique young woman with a will and determination to succeed.

"Most people don't realize how disciplined she has to be to keep everything in balance," said Crittenden County High School Principal Rhonda Callaway. "She is a junior in high school with professional adult responsibilities. Katie works extremely hard to perform well academically while pursuing a rigorous, junior-level schedule."

Callaway said she and Vince Clark, a school academics advisor, met with the Davies family when the student was a freshman to ensure Katie could be a normal high school student and still pursue an early start to her career.

"We enjoy following Katie's accolades and will continue to support her endeavors throughout high school," Callaway added.

Tailoring a class schedule to a career in hunting might be a little more academic than one might imagine at first blush. Katie's coursework includes accounting, writing and an advanced physical education plan that helps strengthen her arms and shoulders for shooting a bow.

"I make As and Bs... except in chemistry," she says with a sigh. "My junior year has been the toughest so far."

Of course, she spent several days over the past month stalking black bears in Georgia, and in September, she harvested a buck near her home that scored in the high 180s on the Boone and Crocket scale. All of it has been captured on film and will likely soon appear on an outdoors television show. She writes her own hunting blog, takes

college courses so she can shoot for the Southeast Missouri State University archery team in Cape Girardeau, Mo., and she's just learning to drive.

There's no time for dating right now says this brown-eyed, brown-haired young lady who grew up in Siberia and moved to Wisconsin seven years after being adopted by the Davieses.

"I concentrate on my profession and school," she said, pointing out that her sponsors expect a great deal from her, too.

She has some big names behind her. C'Mere Deer game attractants, Pearson Archery, Spypoint game cameras, Opti-Logic binoculars and rangefinders and Schwaker Broadheads are just a few.

Many of her contacts in the industry were developed by her adoptive father, who was once an officer in the United Foundation for Disabled Archers. He is an acquaintance of Kentucky Afield's Tim Farmer, who like Davies pulls his bowstring with his mouth. One of Davies's arms was left paralyzed from a car accident many years ago, but he carved a niche in the hunting industry and serves on pro staffs for archery and hunting groups. His wife, Cindy, is also a very fine archer.

So it was no wonder when at age 9 Katie joined the family, she took up archery almost immediately. She became very interested after her parents tacked a dollar bill to the target and said, put an arrow in it and you can have it.

"We started folding the bills in half, then into quarters and then eighths and she kept hitting him," said her father.

That's when Katie realized archery could be a meal ticket.

Now she's taken deer, bear and turkey with her bow. Her trophy case is full of awards from outdoor 3D and indoor target shooting events from Georgia, Alabama, Pennsylvania, Texas and many other states across the country. She's ranked among the nation's best young talents in the Archery Shooters Association and has been coached and courted by some of the biggest names in the business. Her shooting coach and bow tech are Margie and Jerry Carter, respectively. They own and operate Threadz Custom Bowstrings in Princeton.

Katie and her family are excited about her opportunities as a professional hunter and archer, and they say much of the thanks goes to a school administration that has given some novel thinking to a primitive pursuit.