

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources has certified more than one million students through the Hunter Safety Program.

“I would like to thank the expertise of the volunteer instructors whose generosity helps make Wisconsin known for safe hunting,” said Governor Walker.

In 2011, more than 25,000 students completed the hunter’s safety program, pushing the total enrollment since the course’s launch past the one million mark. Already in 2012, classes are under way or planned for each of the state’s 72 counties for students to carry on the tradition and skills that make hunting in Wisconsin a safe experience for all.

“The hunter education course is taught by volunteer instructors who truly know hunting and have a genuine passion to ensure the tradition is passed on to generations in the safest way possible,” Jon King, Department of Natural Resources’ Hunter Education Administrator and conservation warden, said. “The instructors and this course are the top reasons Wisconsin did not have a single gun-related fatality during the 2010 and 2011 gun-deer seasons.”

Started in Dunn County in 1967, the course seeks to instill in students the knowledge and skillsets to be a responsible hunter. The basic course consists of a minimum of 10 hours, during which students learn how hunting accidents are caused and how they can be prevented. The classes consist of lectures, demonstrations, group discussions, practical exercises and individual study and activity assignments. In 2011, there were 924 classes offered by 3,802 volunteer instructors.

“The way we teach the course is evolving,” King said. “Now, the course has a big emphasis on the real experience – a more hands-on approach which is applicable to real life. However, what has not changed is the course focus on the rules of firearm safety.”

The DNR has also introduced an online version of the course and features bilingual instructors, as well as additional materials for Wisconsin’s diverse population.

“We are ready to instruct students with other challenges – educational or physical,” King said. “We can offer sign language courses and have had students who use wheelchairs.”

King emphasized that all instructors are serious about their role in passing hunting knowledge to the next generation. “Instructors will have a student retake the course to ensure the proper knowledge has been absorbed if necessary. It’s not ideal, but safety is always the top priority.

“This focus and dedication is why the course is on its way to the next million students. Each student who has come before has helped make this course a valuable partner in the hunting heritage of Wisconsin.”