

JANUARY / FEBRUARY / MARCH 2019

Member Spotlight



**CALEB
OCKER**



My name is Caleb Ocker, I am the owner of Ocker's Taxidermy, "Giving life a second chance," in central Pennsylvania. Currently I work out of my home in Middletown, PA and I am just weeks away from the completion of my permanent taxidermy shop in Shippensburg, PA. The shop is a 28' x 36' pole barn accented with authentic barn wood walls and an accent wall with a hand painted mural that will have displayed trophy mounts. I am 20 years old and have been in business for one year. In the spring of 2018, I attended Bill Allen's Pocono Institute of Taxidermy school. In the fall of 2018, I attended my first taxidermy show and competition at Cabelas in Hamburg, PA. Instantly after joining the Pennsylvania Taxidermy Association, I made important connections and met amazing professionals that supported my questions and welcomed me into the taxidermy network. I attended all of the seminars that were offered and brought home an overload of information and an immense amount of new learning. Entering the competition was probably the highlight for me. The competition was an important part of my growth as a taxidermist; the minute details and the 1:1 critiques with the judges was irreplaceable. After meeting Vince Spellane at the show, I spent an entire weekend with him in a 1:1 teaching opportunity on white tail deer eye and nose detailing. In March 2019, I attended my first PTA convention at Seven Springs. I attended every seminar I could, spent lots of time

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speaking to vendors and meeting other taxidermists that share in the love of this trade. I have learned that there are so many ways of approaching different tasks and challenges, but the people I have met have been open to sharing and discussing their methods for the benefit of all involved.

I grew up with a love for the outdoors; currently an avid hunter, trapper and fisherman, I was introduced to the outdoors by my dad at a very early age and have enjoyed countless experience with him and my older brother. I normally spend every moment of my spare time by a pond, river or in the woods. My other interests are in wildlife management and food plot preparation, and I have been able to put these passions into practice at our family cabin in Moshannon, PA.

I recommend all taxidermists to join the PTA, enter competitions, join blogs, membership social media pages, attend conventions, seminars and continue being open to new techniques and increasing their knowledge. The business may be seen as an old time "classic" profession, but the skills, materials, and information is new on a daily basis. I love taxidermy, I love the opportunity to be a contributing entrepreneurial owner in my community and I love having the opportunity to take someone's trophy and artistically "give life a second chance."