Phoenix, Arizona, August 9, 2012 – Congratulations to Tyler Rico, Alexandria Provine and Joey Kendrick who have not only raised the bar in Arizona’s organized shooting programs, but have also been extraordinary ambassadors for the nation’s Junior shooting sports. “We are proud to honor these young teammates and are fortunate to have supported their growth and success in our junior rifle divisions that include high power, smallbore and air rifle,” said Tom Kirby, a veteran shooting coach and a Junior Division director for the non-profit, Arizona State Rifle and Pistol Association (ASRPA).

Kirby announced that the junior rifle trio were offered appointments to the three US military academies for scholastic achievement and rifle shooting accomplishments, and will join their academy’s collegiate NCAA rifle teams. This includes the Air Force Academy, West Point Military Academy, and Annapolis Naval Academy. The teammates just entered their individual basic cadet fitness training and will start their four-year officer-in-training classes in mid-August. They will graduate from the academies as second lieutenants or ensign and then will transfer into active-duty military assignments. The rifle teammates are supported by Rio Salado Sportsman’s Club in Mesa, Arizona and the Tuscon Rifle Cub, in Tucson, both members of the Arizona’s ASRPA.

“According to available information, there have never been three junior teammates on the same high power, smallbore and air rifle teams, who have earned appointments to the three military academies at the same time,” says Kirby. “This is most likely an Arizona and national first,” he added. “I don’t think that’s ever happened, ever,” said retired Major Bob DeWitt, coach of Tucson’s Flowing Wells JROTC rifle team since 1995.

A US military academy college scholarship is now worth near $425,000, thus the total amount of the three scholarships is over $1.25 million in tuition and support for these young achievers. Kirby said the academies search for high school graduates who are competitive young men and women, which makes organized rifle shooting an excellent athletic activity for kids to be involved in, he said. There are about 20 NCAA division-one colleges in the country that offer scholarships to participate in rifle shooting, so there’s a lot of education opportunities attached to organized rifle shooting, he added.

Tyler Rico, age 17, who just graduated from Flowing Wells High School in Tucson, Arizona, received an automatic appointment to the Air Force Academy for his record-setting rifle accolades, as well as academics. Tyler will be joining the AFA Fighting Falcons Rifle Team and will compete in .22-caliber smallbore rifle and air rifle, which are NCAA collegiate sports. Tyler began competitive rifle with ASRPA’s Junior High Power Rifle Team at age 10 and set several national records with the AR-15 match rifle before age 14. He then began shooting smallbore rifle and air rifle with the support of Rio Salado’s junior shooting program, and quickly became the top-ranked junior rifle competitor in the country at age 16, and one of the best high power rifle shooters in the country. Tyler stated that competing in all three rifle disciplines helped advance his competitiveness a lot faster than if he would have just stayed with smallbore and air rifle.

Tyler is now a four-time national junior champion of the Civilian Marksmanship Program (CMP), and the National Rifle Association (NRA). He owns the highest junior across-the-course record of 794 out of 800 points shooting at bullseye targets at 200, 300 and 600 yards. At age 13, he became the youngest person to earn the Distinguished Rifleman badge, and the youngest competitor to place second in the President’s-Hundred Match held at the CMP’s National Rifle Matches, out-scoring all of the US Army Marksmanship Unit’s team members, and other Junior competitors in the process. Tyler owns a national record in sporter air rifle, as well.

Tyler is a member of Tucson’s Flowing Wells HS Army JROTC unit that earned, “Team National Champion,” at the 2012 national championships held this past March in Anniston, Alabama. Tyler also took second place in the Individual championship division. He recently won the men’s gold medal at the National Junior Olympic Shooting Championships, held at the Olympic Training Center in Colorado Springs, Colorado in April. This first place finish earned him a position on the coveted USA Shooting’s, “National Junior Team.”