
It's a New Year - Looking Towards A Sharper Future

Happy New Year! The New Year brings new beginnings and very exciting news.

One important piece of news is that we have changed the name of the organization to Knife Rights (and this newsletter thus becomes your "Knife Rights News Slice").

Same organization, new name. The U.S. Knife & Tool Association name was a quick response to a developing situation when we first came up with the insane idea for this organization. It's what you get when you throw together a concept and web site to gauge interest in a mere 24 hours, with a bit of sleep deprivation thrown in for good measure. I don't think any of us were all that thrilled by USKTA. As I covered in my last update, we needed a better name; one that was more marketable, one that had a memorable domain name (that was also available), and one that wouldn't be confused with AKTI, the industry's organization.

Knife Rights more clearly identifies what we are all about and won't be confused with AKTI. We have secured the KnifeRights.org, .com, .net, etc. domains and the new www.KnifeRights.org Web site is now live. More to the point, we are now ready for you to join as a Charter member! That's the most important and exciting news and more details about that further along in this update.

This represents the official launch of Knife Rights, which very conveniently also coincides with SHOT Show, the Shooting, Hunting and Outdoor Trade's huge annual trade show. You'd be hard pressed to find many attendees who do not carry a knife and most own more than one. If you are attending SHOT Show, be sure to pick up one of our red, white and blue KnifeRights.org buttons available at many of the booths. Wear it at the show and help us spread the word. I'm pleased to say that it's not just knife companies who are hosting our button boxes, this issue is bigger than that.

Launching Knife Rights, even pinching pennies, did not come cheap. I promised we'd do it right before we'd ask you to join, but that still takes money and that has to come from somewhere. I'd like to acknowledge the individuals and companies who shared my vision and commitment and who stepped up to the plate and contributed the significant sums needed to make this happen, our Cornerstone Founding Members:

Al Mar Knives â€™ Gary Fadden

Essential Gear â€™ Robert Walker & Susan Martin

Ethan Becker

KA-BAR Knives â€™ John Stitt

Lone Wolf Knives â€™ Jim Wehrs

Ontario Knife Company â€™ Nick Turbrvic, Jr.

Tops Knives â€™ Mike Fuller

Wenger Swiss Army Knives

This is a grass roots organization; by knife owners, for knife owners. For all the considerable generosity of these Cornerstone Founding Members, all they got is the same single membership and vote you do (except for Ethan, who for his generosity got roped into serving on the Board of Directors). All the more reason to recognize them for their efforts to launch an organization of knife owners because they understand how important this is and ponied up the bucks with no guarantees whatsoever. If you're attending SHOT Show, please take a moment and thank them for their generosity.

Speaking of the Board of Directors, Knife Rights was purposely started with a small Board of Directors so that additional directors can be added from the general membership as the organization grows. Knife Rights: by knife owners, for knife owners. You can meet the members of your Board at www.KnifeRights.org.

Political power to defend our rights will only come from big numbers. As we start up, every penny you give us for membership dues will be reinvested to grow the organization. While knife enthusiasts will form the core member group, we must reach out beyond the knife enthusiast if we are to succeed. We must also entice some of the millions of knife owners to whom their knives are simply essential tools. We need them to join us in our fight. That is the only way we will become a large enough organization that we cannot be ignored.

Until membership in an organization reaches six-figures, it doesn't count. Once you exceed 100,000 members, they start to pay attention. That's the threshold. From there, the more members you have, the more votes you represent, the more clout you gain. Politicians don't necessarily understand reason, but they do understand votes.

Perhaps the largest group of potential Knife Rights members are gun owners, and in particular, members of the NRA. These are citizens who have been fighting for their rights for a long time against the same radicals that want to take away your knives. Every gun owner I have spoken with immediately "gets it." They understand that in many respects this is just another front in their own battle and they will join us. The NRA has nearly 4 million members. If we can attract just 2.5% of those NRA members we have a six-figure membership. I am very pleased to note that one of our very first Cornerstone Charter Members is NRA President, Sandra Froman, so we're definitely off to a good start. (Read Sandy's letter at www.KnifeRights.org)

However, that's only a beginning, the easiest pickings as it were. Think of all the hobbies, avocations and jobs that require a knife: Fishermen, hunters, archers, backpackers, construction workers, carpenters, chefs and the list goes on and on because knives are indispensable tools, even today. Every one of them is a potential member; we just have to reach them and let them know the threat exists. That leads me to our tag lines or marketing slogans that focus on the most critical aspects of what this organization is all about, boiling it down to fundamentals.

We have adopted two tag lines for Knife Rights. The first emphasizes our primary objective to defend our freedom to own, carry and use the knives we choose, fighting efforts to restrict our right to do so, providing for "A Sharper Future," not one dulled by ridiculous restrictions. The second emphasizes our belief that these are TOOLS that have been essential to civilized society for practical and lawful purposes for millennia. Knives and other edged tools are a cornerstone of civilization and remain useful tools to millions of citizens even in the modern world. Our right to own, use and carry these tools should not be abridged; these are "Essential Tools - Essential Rights."

Here are the mission statements of Knife Rights, Inc., the 501(c)(4) membership advocacy organization, and Knife Rights Foundation, Inc., the 501(c)(3) charitable educational foundation:

Knife Rights is dedicated to:

1. Providing knife and edged tool owners an effective voice to influence public policy and to oppose efforts to restrict the right to own, use and carry knives and edged tools;
2. Encouraging safe, responsible and lawful use of knives and edged tools through education and outreach, enhancing positive perceptions of knives and edged tools and their owners and users;
3. Encouraging the marketing of knives and edged tools in a responsible manner conducive to the organization's goals;
4. Cooperating with advocacy organizations having complimentary interests and goals;
5. Providing knife and edged tool owners with services that they will find valuable in order to build membership to enable success in our primary objectives.

Knife Rights Foundation is dedicated to:

1. Encouraging safe and responsible use of knives and edged tools through education and outreach;
2. Educating knife owners, public officials and the general public about the history of knives and edged tools;
3. Educating knife owners, public officials and the general public about knife and edged tool related laws and regulations.

In the past few weeks the non-profit organizations have been incorporated. Knife Rights Inc.'s 501(c)(4) tax exempt application (Form 1024) has been submitted to the IRS. All these public documents are available on KnifeRights.org

along with the Knife Rights bylaws for anyone inclined to know more about how the organization will be run. The Foundation's more complicated 501(c)(3) application (Form 1023) will follow shortly. We need your membership dues to help pay for the legal expertise this form requires. Your dues to Knife Rights are not tax deductible as charitable contributions. Contributions to the Knife Rights Foundation will be.

Most of you receiving this Update originally signed up on the USKTA site. That was the first step and helped convince us that the concept had merit and was worth pursuing. Now is when it really counts. Please join Knife Rights today! Every member is critical; we need your support to make Knife Rights a force to be reckoned with. Become a Charter Member today!

Knife Rights offers a range of Charter Memberships and there's one that will suit you perfectly. Regular annual membership starts at only \$28. Reduced price non-voting memberships are available to students and to non-U.S. citizens. For only \$50 you can become a Knife Rights Benefactor and in appreciation we'll give you FREE a superior quality KnifeRights.org cap to help spread the word, an \$18 value.

For those who are truly passionate about protecting our rights, and are in a position to do it, we offer an individual Cornerstone Charter Membership for \$250. For your exceptional generosity, you get the cap, a unique Cornerstone Charter Member lapel pin and listing on the Knife Rights Cornerstone Honor Roll page (the latter optional at your choice).

We also offer special memberships to knifemakers, knife and tool retailers, manufacturers and supporting corporations and organizations. Visit www.KnifeRights.org/membership and JOIN TODAY.

As an extra special incentive to become a Charter Knife Rights Member TODAY, a number of custom knifemakers have generously donated extraordinary examples of their craft to Knife Rights. The value of these knives starts at nearly \$300 and goes up from there. Some of these knifemakers have waiting lists running into years, so their support of the Knife Rights launch in this manner is all the more incredible and appreciated. Every new Charter Member who signs up in the first 60 days gets a chance to win one of these incredible knives. You'll find a link to these beautiful knives with photos and descriptions on the KnifeRights.org home page and the membership page as well.

Visit www.KnifeRights.org/membership and JOIN TODAY to get your chance to win one of these extraordinary custom knives.

The list is short only because this was a last minute idea we came up with just days before the launch. I anticipate we'll be adding more makers to this list before SHOT Show is over.

Charles May - www.charlesmayknives.blademakers.com

Darrel Ralph - www.darrelralph.com

Ken Steigerwalt

Larry Harley - www.lonesomepineknives.com

Rick Hinderer - www.rickhindererknives.com

Trace Rinaldi - www.thrblades.com

Finally, we have instituted a Member-Get-A-Member program. You can earn a free annual membership renewal; or more than one. Just encourage 10 of your friends (who have not already signed up at USKTA.org) to join Knife Rights and we'll reward you with an annual membership renewal. Be sure they include your name in the referral field when they sign up. Full details can be found at www.KnifeRights.org/Member-Get-A-Member. If everyone who has signed up at USKTA.org would do this, we'd have over 10,000 members almost instantly. The Knife Rights member who brings in the most new members in the first year will win a custom knife worth over \$300!

The new KnifeRights.org web site is really just the most basic of beginnings and there are plenty of rough edges we need to get smoothed out, but all things considered, we've come a long way in a very short time. You can see on the Main Menu all the grayed-out menu items that represent content and services we plan to provide as membership growth and resources allow. Much of the most useful areas and all services will be available only to members. As we gain more members, we will have the resources needed to bring this site to life.

Knife Rights is your organization. While advocacy is our main purpose, service to members is one of the pillars that will support this effort, as noted in item 5 of our mission statement. Please let us know what services we can offer you that will make your membership in Knife Rights more valuable. We have lots of ideas, but we want to hear from you as well.

Let me extend a special thanks to all who have helped these past few weeks as we labored to get Knife Rights launched at the worst possible time, right over the holidays. You all know who you are and you know I sincerely appreciate all you've done. An even more special thank you to my lovely wife Sue, who has put up with my insanity for nearly 33 years and who has exhibited the patience of a saint and been even more supportive over the past month as we worked nearly 24/7 pulling this all together.

Now I am off to SHOT Show to spread the word about Knife Rights. Please join Knife Rights TODAY and please help us spread the word. Email your friends and associates, post on online forums and blogs, add a Knife Rights sig line to your signature and our link buttons and banners to your site and blog (all available at www.kniferights.org under the Membership menu), become a Benefactor Charter Member and wear your Knife Rights cap with pride. Help us build our membership, because ultimately, that's what this is all about. Only through a large membership can we accomplish our goal to protect our right to own, use and carry the knives we choose.

Visit www.KnifeRights.org/membership and JOIN TODAY.

Best wishes for a healthy, happy and prosperous new year.

Doug Ritter

Become a Charter Member Today!