

First Shots Pistol

Members, the National Shooting Sports Foundation (NSSF) reached out to my business about its new program; First Shots. I have been a member of NSSF for many years but I don't own a range. NSSF is the trade organization that puts on the Shot Show every January in Las Vegas. They also represent firearms manufacturers, retailers and ranges on legislative issues and government relations. NSSF has been a force in the firearms related industry since 1961.

The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (BATFE) has estimated that approximately half of the firearms sold in the last six months were purchased by first time gun buyers. There have been several gun sales records broken in those six months. That's a whole lot of people that likely don't know much about any aspect of shooting. First Shots is a program for those new shooters. It is designed to familiarize the new shooter with the ranges and to make the new shooter comfortable going to the range. In the process, it should make the experienced shooter more comfortable with the new shooter.

So, our Board of Directors decided that the program is worth trying. There is a First Shots Committee that includes Pauline Goerdt, Bryan Wells, John Helgeson, Seth Rugo and myself.

We intend to hold this class for pistol only for now and to offer it on a monthly basis. Our primary focus will be on Safety, Marksmanship (to include instruction and a range exercise) and Range Etiquette. Seth will be seeking NRA Rifle Instructor certification with an eye on possibly getting First Shots Rifle up and running. Don't worry though, there is still room for you to take the lead on First Shots Shotgun program!!

What does Hudson Rod, Gun and Archery gain by offering this class? Hopefully, a safer and more respectful (if that is the right word) relationship between the new shooter and the very experienced shooter. The new shooter should be able to walk out onto the range and take very appropriate actions in that setting. That sounds good to everyone I've discussed it with.

I think you should also be aware of the financial aspects of the program. NSSF provides eye and hearing protection, ammunition and safety brochures

and a shooting guide and diary for each participant at no charge. The club supplies the range time (one hour per monthly class) and a chamber flag for each participant for which the club receives \$50.00 per participant. If the participant fills out the NSSF survey after the class, they will receive an electronic gift card for \$25.00. That gift card can only be used at Hudson Rod, Gun and Archery. That new shooter can use the gift card on anything the club sells, including any membership, range fees, safety equipment or snacks. For every gift card redeemed at the club, the club will receive a \$25.00 check from NSSF.

I have volunteered for NRA Women on Target in the recent past. I thought it was a great program and still do. But every time I worked that event, I could not help but wonder why there was not a program like it for men. First Shots is open to all so fills a great void to my way of thinking. There are no NSSF classes in MN and the closest club offering an NSSF class in WI is 280 miles from Hudson. Our listing on the NSSF web site may bring in participants from a fair distance.

Please note that everyone involved in this program is a volunteer. Pauline sent out an email requesting volunteers to help with the program. We currently have 18 volunteers that have come forward. I am very impressed by the response. To me, that suggests that I am far from the only one that believes this program needs to happen and has great potential.

Please help to get the word out to any inexperienced shooters you meet. Other participating clubs report that word of mouth is their best marketing tool.

I am in the process of trying to put together a one page ad that I can laminate and will be trying to get them on the counter at any gun shop that will allow it. I would also like to have business card size ads that gun shops could give to any customer they feel might benefit from the class. If you are able to get these marketing materials out to dealers, please let me know.

If you see any new shooters at the club, please welcome them. Help make their first experience here a positive one.

Thank you to the Board and all of the volunteers.

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