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HOME-BASED FFLS
MAKE VOICES HEARD

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THE INDUSTRY'S BUSINESS MAGAZINE — EST. 1955

MAY 2022

*Accessories Accent
Handgun Market*

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Find Your Sales Magnet

It may not be a market for everyone, but high-end firearms offer a way for stores to stand out from the competition and serve as a “sales magnet” to get customers in the door.

Dan Hartman, owner of Maryland Elite Firearms, shared giving customers an opportunity to handle high-price firearms or those portrayed in box office hits can lead to a sale — even if it's not until several months down the road.

“They may not buy one today, but they'll remember you when they're more financially ready,” he said. “Just getting to hold one plants the seed.”

See “High-End Appeal” on p. 36.

RED DOTS ARE RED HOT

One of the hottest movers of the handgun accessory segment — if not the hottest — today is red dot optics. Every day, skeptics are turned into believers, with Handgun Sales Specialist Josh Hunter of Fort Thompson Sporting Goods a recent convert.

“This whole concept of putting red dots on pistols seemed really stupid to me,” he said. “I decided I was going to give this thing a legitimate shake and see how this goes, and I found I really like it. I carry it every day.”

Inside “Adding Value: Accessories Accent Handgun Market” (pp. 28–31), learn about how dealers are selling red dots, triggers, barrels, lights and more to a motivated customer base.

CAPITOL HILL ADVOCACY

The NSSF hosted its first in-person Congressional Fly-In since 2019 last



MAY 2022

month, where teams met with more than 40 congressional members and their staffs. *SI* Editor Jade Moldae joined 50 industry professionals for a day on Capitol Hill, highlighting the value of face-to-face meetings during what will be a pivotal midterm election cycle.

See the lead *Industry News* story on p. 10 for an overview of the event and the industry's legislative priorities presented to congressional members. Moldae provides commentary in part of his *Industry Link* column on p. 50.

NEXT MONTH: AMMUNITION & RELOADING UPDATE

The June issue will provide an update on the ammunition and reloading segment — featuring the perspectives of ammunition makers, component providers and dealers. They offer insight on when supply will return to “normal,” as well as other observations from the past two years.

Tips for capitalizing on customers pursuing DIY projects for their firearms, a preview of fall bowhunting sales, home-defense long-gun sales and secure storage are also covered in June.

Have a comment after reading something in this issue? Contact the *SI* team: comments@shootingindustry.com. **SI**

FEATURE HIGHLIGHT

“High-End Appeal”

By Tim Barker

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Photo: Taurus

CAPTURING SALES FROM THE FEMALE BUYER

We're a "hunting and fishing store" in a very small rural town. Our competition mainly consists of a few smaller shops in the county, one of which was established several decades before we opened. And then there are Cabela's Bowling Green (Ky.) and Bass Pro Nashville, Dunham's, Rural King and other big-box sporting goods stores within 50 miles.

Partner Mark Hood and myself opened our store on Black Friday 2014 in about 500 sq. ft. We've since moved twice and have nearly 7,000 sq. ft. of space.

Enough company background. Looking at our customer base, a full 20% of our gun-purchasing customers is female. (We don't capture customer info beyond 4473 sales.) Granted we have more repeat business from their male counterparts, but we have many repeat female customers.

Probably the number-one comment we get is a lot of women feel talked over or around when they go to purchase a firearm elsewhere. This is especially true, it seems, when a husband, brother, father, whatever, accompanies them. Some women may not be comfortable walking into a gun store alone, but two steps in the door here and they know they're fine.

One of the main things we do differently than some of the shops we've seen, and hear comments on, is when a customer walks in the doors, no matter who they are, they're greeted (often by

**Build
relationships,
not just a
customer base;
make them feel
comfortable and
welcome and
above all, don't
talk to the guy
behind them!**

name) and asked if we can help them with anything. If so, we follow up with, "Would you like a closer look?"

We talk directly to the female buyer, asking questions. Based on her answers we'll show a variety of options, clear the firearm, hand it to them, ask how it feels, demonstrate racking the slide if they seem a novice, hand it back and ask if they can rack it. If not, we'll offer other choices. We spend time showing different tricks and tips we've used ourselves. It can be time consuming, and they may not make a decision on the spot, although roughly 90% do, but they'll be more comfortable and better informed when they leave.

One of our repeat female customers has purchased two shotguns, an AR, two handguns, several accessories and loads

of ammunition, plus she brings her two teenagers with her and is getting them interested in the shooting sports.

Another purchased a KelTec CP33, S&W EZ, plus holster and ammo, then a \$1,600 hunting rifle and recently a Ruger MAX-9 Pro and has a wish list for a couple of "fun" guns like a Saint or a Renegade. The list goes on; [this is] just a sample of a few of the fun gals we get back in, even if they're just stopping by for more ammo or to see what's come in.

We didn't really set out to capture the female buyer, but the fact we are by default a major female presence, has worked to make us stand out among the competition.

Our diverse inventory also helps. In addition to a variety of gun choices, we keep several styles of conceal carry options, shirts, leggings, purses and offer tips, points for thought and opinions (personal insights) into the advantages/disadvantages of each.

Since most of us carry, we're able to give some ideas on the things we've learned in adapting what's available to fit different body types and clothing styles. That's something a male sales person just can't convey. But at the same time, we can still relate to the male buyers because so much info and marketing is already directed toward them, and we try to pick up on what works for this person and share with customers with similar issues.

Hopefully, in this ramble there may be some insight or sparks of an idea that can give others the initiative to "think outside the box". Build relationships, not just a customer base; make them feel comfortable and welcome and above all, don't talk to the guy behind them!

Kathy A. Pitcock

Red Hill Trading Post
Scottsville, Ky.

Kathy, thank you for your letter. Expanding armed self-defense and the shooting sports to women is a topic we frequently visit in *Shooting Industry*, and it's rare to get such a detailed perspective. We appreciate this and hope it equips other dealers, also. Readers, have any success stories you'd like to share? Let me know: editor@shootingindustry.com.

— Jade Moldae, Editor

"PARIAH" DEALER REPLIES POUR IN

Editor's Note: Responses to home-based FFL Matthew Sims' "Pariah" letter, published in the Jan. 2022 issue, continue to pour in from other home-based FFLs and storefronts. Here's a small collection of the dozens we've received so far. For additional reactions, see this month's *Industry Link* column on p. 50.

I'm a home-based gunsmith/07 Manufacturer/Dealer. Being "locked out" of some of the major distributors and manufacturers puts us at a serious disadvantage to the brick-and-mortar stores. We can't compete with pricing or volume like the stores that can order from the larger distributors, so we lose business.

What generally happens is a customer will call or visit us to get a price and then use those numbers to find the gun they want at a lower price somewhere else. It's almost not worth it to sell firearms except to a couple loyal customers, friends and family.

Luckily, some of our accounts are with companies like Areo, Davidson's and Lipsey's that will deal with us to help keep us afloat.

This industry is tough enough with all of the outside political pressure trying to shut us down and strip our rights. So when a distributor or manufacturer refuses to deal with us little guys it just shows me they're more interested in dealing with high-volume, high-dollar sales than working together to drive the industry forward.

Steve Golla, Co-Owner
Twin Oaks Custom Gunsmithing
Tidioute, Pa.

For me the biggest frustration is being treated like a second-class citizen or parasite. Do they think all home-based FFLs want to stay that way? Personally, it's my dream to one day own a storefront and shooting range. I simply don't have the start-up capital to do it.

I'm also currently working on my own prototype firearm, as I'm a gunsmith and machinist. I hope to one day bring it to market. I'll say: Should my design be

successful, I'll remember the wholesalers that wouldn't sell to me.

Never look down upon someone who is just starting out; you never know what they might become and what future opportunities you lost.

Ben DeVore, Owner
American Gun Resurrection
Sheboygan, Wis.

I've been in a brick-and-mortar retail store for 40 years. The problem of getting inventory is no different for me than home-based FFLs. In years past, Remington, Marlin, etc., would sell to the big-box stores at prices and quantities not available to us. I've seen it happen to other businesses in my area — Woolco, Best Products, Kmart, Dick's, etc. — they have all gone by the wayside and I'm still here. Walmart now gets all the benefits.

The industry doesn't care about the independent and never has. If the home-based business has to play by the same rules as I have to, it's fair. If they get special consideration, it's not. We should all have to play by the same rules!

**Never look down
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If I have built good relations with wholesalers to include volume, and quick payment then I deserve better service. But my \$100,000/year account doesn't get the same service as a \$1 million/year account, so I have to wait to get my allocation. My salesman works on a commission and losing a \$1 million account would reduce

his salary, so he has to take care of that account or it will find someone who will.

That's just business, so suck it up and live with the program. All your complaints aren't going to change anything. Believe me, I know!

Paul Decker, Owner
Hunter's Heaven
Hayes, Va.

I own a home-based FFL. I originally started in rural Minnesota, but have moved my business to rural Kentucky.

As I was reading the article and subsequent comments, I found myself saying, "This is spot on!" I've been incredibly frustrated by the lack of support from distributors. I was a CCW instructor in Minnesota, and was able to gain extra sales through the course, but more importantly, I was able to provide my students and customers the ability to try firearms on the range and then hone in on finding them a firearm that was right for them. Because of this, I gained a loyal customer base who trusted me to find them their firearm or related gear.

However, the *only* distributor that would even give me the time of day, was/ is Lipsey's. The issue I have with this is I have no options when it comes to getting my customers the best price and the right firearm. If Lipsey's is out of stock, so am I. Additionally, firearms manufacturers will oftentimes have exclusives at specific distributors. I can only access the Lipsey's exclusives. Add to that, they'll also have "sales" specific to a distributor, which I simply can't access.

What this leads to is, the big-box stores getting specific models at a discounted price. They can essentially edge me out on pricing or I have to sell at MAP, which is often 5–10% over cost. There are not a lot of industries that can have sustainable businesses on a 5–10% margin, unless they're selling large quantities.

Not only is it difficult for us, as home-based FFLs, to adhere to the regulations of the ATF, but then we have to fight against our industry supply chain, too. **SI**

Taylor Cooper, Owner/CEO
Midstate Armory
Richmond, Ky.



ADVOCACY AT WORK ON CAPITOL HILL

By Jade Moldae

For the first time since 2019, NSSF hosted an in-person Congressional Fly-In in Washington, D.C. (The 2020 event was cancelled at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and the 2021 event was conducted virtually.)

During the two-day event, held April 5–6, 50 professionals representing the manufacturing, distribution and retail segments of the U.S. firearms industry met with 41 Congressional members and U.S. Senators.

These meetings enabled industry professionals to share how they've been impacted by financial discrimination by big banks, as well as asking for their support on critical legislative issues

impacting the industry.

"There's no substitute for having U.S. Representatives and Senators hearing directly from industry leaders about how policies from Washington affect their businesses, their ability to hire and grow, and most importantly, their ability to provide millions of law-abiding Americans the ability to exercise their Second Amendment rights," said Lawrence Keane, NSSF general counsel and SVP of government and public affairs. "It was a real show of force and a testament to our entire industry that such a large number of our industry principals came to our nation's capital and participated in the 2022

Congressional Fly-In. It was a resounding success."

Key meetings were held with U.S. Rep. Steve Scalise (R-LA), House Republican Whip; Sen. Mike Crapo (R-ID), Ranking Republican Member on the Senate Finance Committee; Sen. John Barrasso (R-WY), Ranking Republican Member on the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee; and Sen. Hagerty (R-TN) Member of both the Senate Appropriations Committee and Senate Banking Committee.

"There's no substitute for having U.S. Representatives and Senators hearing directly from industry leaders about how policies from Washington affect their businesses."

Lawrence Keane, NSSF
General Counsel and SVP
of Government and Public Affairs

MEMBERS OF CONGRESS ADDRESS ATTENDEES

Three U.S. Senators and the highest-ranking Republican woman in Congress personally addressed Fly-In attendees across both days of the event.

On the evening of Tuesday, Apr. 5, 38 U.S. House members attended the NSSF PAC reception, with Sen. Rick Scott (R-FL) serving as the keynote speaker. Sen. Scott

Continued on p. 12

RITON OPTICS RECEIVES CAPITAL INVESTMENT

The continued growth of the Riton Optics brand has led to a capital investment from an American family investment group that will fuel even more growth.

"Riton has and will continue to disrupt the industry by providing quality products with the best value to dealers and their consumers," said Riton Senior VP John Piscione.



Riton anticipates expanding its product line with cutting-edge innovations, backed by its solid warranty and customer service. Every Riton optic goes through a rigorous dual-inspection

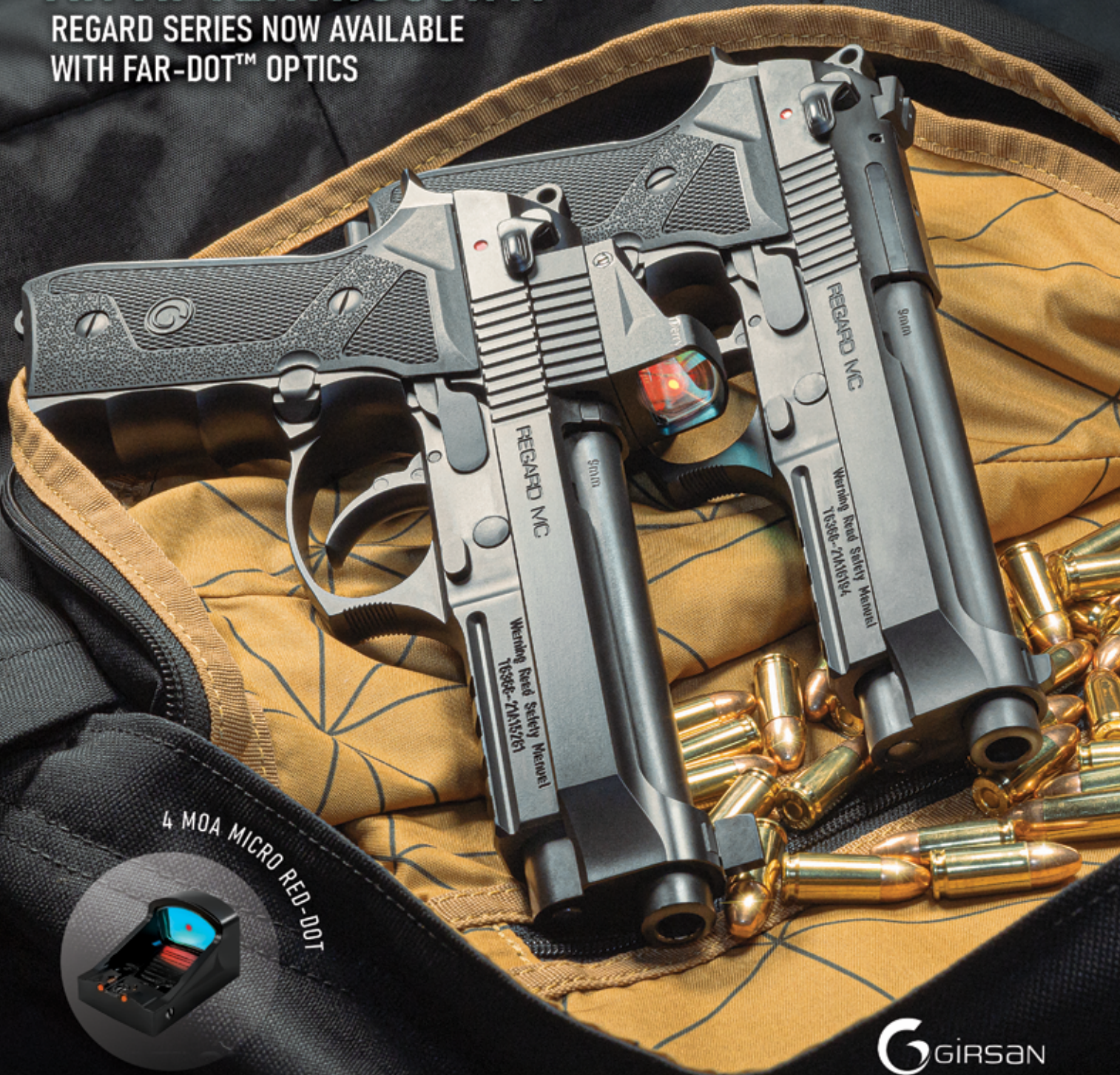
process, and is backed by the Riton Promise Warranty, which includes rapid product replacement on all returns.

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GIRSAN

Let's be honest many pistols today look like the optics were an aftermarket addition, not the case with the Regard MC Optic. Designed and developed for a NATO member, this lightweight full-size 9mm pistol is now available with FAR-DOT™ Optics, 4 MOA Red-Dot System + Fiber Optic Rear Sight for fast target acquisition. Unlike similar models, the Optics are seamlessly built in the slide at half the price of our competition. SRP \$640

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NSSF 2022 Congressional Fly-In Team 2 (from left): Patrick Rothwell, NSSF (team lead); Al Kasper, Savage Arms; Joe Bartozzi, NSSF; Jade Moldae, FMG Publications/Shooting Industry; Carlos Tuason, Armscor; Brannon Hancock, Sportsman's Warehouse; Christoph Eisenhardt, Norma Ammunition; Paul Spitale, Colt/CZ-USA.

Continued from p. 10

is chairman of the National Republican Senatorial Committee.

Later during the Tuesday evening event, Sen. Chuck Grassley (R-IA) was honored as the 2021 NSSF Legislator of the Year. As Ranking Member of the Senate Judiciary Committee, Sen. Grassley was instrumental in blocking gun control lobbyist David Chipman's nomination to lead the ATF last year.

The morning of April 6, Sen. Kevin

Cramer (R-ND) shared an update on how he has personally endeavored to stop discriminatory banking practices that affect the firearms industry. Sen. Cramer serves on the Senate Banking Committee and introduced the Fair Access to Banking Act (S.563), a bill that would prevent discrimination by banks and financial service providers against constitutionally protected industries and law-abiding businesses. Sen. Cramer was NSSF's 2020 Legislator of the Year.

U.S. Rep. Elise Stefanik (R-NY), chair of the House Republican Conference and the third-highest ranking Republican, was the keynote speaker during lunch on the day of the Fly-In. Rep. Stefanik outlined how the power structure in the lower chamber is poised to change after the midterm election — highlighting the emergence of several young, pro-gun Republican women who could be elected to Congress in November.

LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

There were several legislative priorities presented to U.S. Congressional members, including: asking for support for the Recreational Lands Package (S.3266) and the MAPLand Act (S.904), dispelling the myths of "blanket immunity" from the Protection of Lawful Commerce in Arms Act (PLCAA) and magazine bans, appropriations requests for FY 2023 and more.

The three main points of interest during conversations with members and their staffs were: financial discrimination

against the firearm industry (with nearly every attendee providing firsthand accounts of being denied financial services based on the sole nature of being in the firearms industry — rather than credit), ATF oversight and the impact of President Biden's "zero tolerance" policy and the FFL Protection Act (strengthening the penalty for thefts of firearms from FFLs).

FOLLOW-UPS

In less than 24 hours after the event, NSSF officials reported five cosponsors were added to priority legislation — with several more agreed in principle.

Mere hours after the last meeting of the Fly-In, the Senate passed the MAPLand Act (Modernizing Access to our Public Land Act), which will improve public land access by digitizing integrated mapping resources for outdoor recreation. After gaining near unanimous passage through the House of Representatives in March, this bill will be headed to the president's desk to be signed into law.

Of great interest to the industry, Apr. 11, President Biden announced his second nominee to lead the ATF, former U.S. Attorney Steve Dettelbach. Dettelbach's previous public statements supporting bans on AR-15s, universal background checks and "red flag" laws have risen "significant concerns," according to NSSF.

SAVE THE DATE

The 2023 NSSF Congressional Fly-In will be held April 18–19, 2023. For more info, visit nssf.org/government-relations.

HAVA HOSTS 1ST ANNUAL RUCK UP EVENT

The Independence Fund's (TIF) Tactical Program partnered with Honored American Veterans Afield (HAVA) and Veterans Equine Therapeutic Services (V.E.T.S.) for a first annual Ruck Up Event, hosted April 9–10. This event brought 14 veterans together for a day of shooting at Niantic Sportsmen's Club in East Lyme, Conn., and a day to learn outdoor survival skills at the V.E.T.S. facility in Stonington, Conn.

Apr. 9, HAVA hosted the firearms portion of the event and partnered with Matthew Fleisher, president of the Niantic

Sportsmen's Club, where the veterans shot pistol, long range .22 rifle and archery. TIF donated funds to ensure each participant was able to go home with the same recurve bows they learned how to shoot with during the event. Niantic Sportsmen's Club donated the use of their facility and provided lunch and snacks for the event.

Apr. 10, V.E.T.S. staff conducted an outdoor survival skills training exercise. Participants learned survival skills such as shelter, fire building, as well as how to approach, pack and lead horses if necessary in survival situations. Bob Stefanowski, a local businessman and politician running for governor in the upcoming Connecticut election came to show his support for the veteran



community at the V.E.T.S. ranch.

"Planning this event went smoothly with the help of all of our volunteers and the professionalism they showed," said Kurt Herzberg, event lead and HAVA firearms instructor. "We look forward to making this a yearly event and will make every effort to continue to provide a safe and memorable experience for the veteran community."

[/ honoredveterans.org](https://honoredveterans.org)

[/ independencefund.org](https://independencefund.org) / vetsct.org

ATN DONATES \$300,000, OPTICS FOR UKRAINE RELIEF

American Technologies Network Corp. (ATN), maker of innovative optics for the civilian, law enforcement and military markets, has donated \$300,000 and optics equipment to Ukraine via an international humanitarian and relief organization.

ATN's Ukraine assistance is channeled through The Gorta Group, an Ireland-based NGO established in 1965 to serve people and communities in war zones and conflicts.

The Gorta Group began providing welfare and medical services for Ukrainian refugees and delivering non-medical items, including much-needed flour for Ukrainian bakeries, in early March.

Marc Vayn, founder and CMO of ATN Corp. and an American citizen born in Kyiv, Ukraine, has been assisting efforts to move desperately needed products to

the Ukrainian citizens from Bulgaria. ATN also set up a donation platform, and Vayn donated \$100,000 of his own money to the cause.

"ATN's donation of \$300,000 will go far to provide food and non-medical supplies to refugees fleeing and remaining within Ukraine. The very act of supplying Ukrainian bakeries with flour to keep producing bread for the citizens is an act of defiance in the face of all those who would seek to destroy a peaceful, democratic country's government. ATN will continue to stand by our brothers and sisters in their fight for freedom," Vayn said.

With a push from U.S. Rep. Mario Diaz-Balart from Florida, ATN received expedited approval from U.S. government agencies to ship nearly 9,000 thermal and night vision optics to the Ukrainian forces. Included in the shipment is the ATN BinoX 4T, the Smart HD thermal binocular with laser rangefinder. Another critical product on its way to the Ukrainian forces is ATN



PS31-3 Night Vision Goggles.

"Night optics are critical to the successful defense of Ukraine from the Russian invaders, and we are confident this will be a large step in improving the capabilities of the Ukrainian forces in the field," Vayn said. / atncorp.com

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GAT MARKETING HONORED AS ONE OF AMERICA'S FASTEST-GROWING COMPANIES

GAT Marketing, an outdoor and firearms marketing firm, has been ranked number 270 out of 500 as one of the fastest growing companies in North and South America by *The Financial Times* and Statista. This list of companies is ranked from 1–500 by Statista and *The Financial Times* through massive data collection and research of tens of thousands of different companies from around the Americas.

The Financial Times' "The Americas' Fastest Growing Companies" list is developed in partnership with Statista and recognizes the most innovative and fastest growing companies in the Americas. The growth rate was calculated based on the 2017–2020 revenue figures, and checked by Statista.

"GAT is honored by the ranking given to us by *The Financial Times* and Statista. We're very grateful our work and success is being recognized, and it's a testament to the hard work done by our entire team," stated Charles Anderson, CEO of GAT Marketing. "GAT Marketing's success has always been, and will



continue to be based on its community and team. The results for our clients speak for themselves. Their increase in spending, along with the referrals to other companies, have allowed us to grow organically on the back of our success."

[/ gatmarketing.com](http://gatmarketing.com)

MIDWAYUSA FOUNDATION DISTRIBUTES YOUTH SHOOTING GRANTS

MidwayUSA Foundation announced it has disbursed grants of over \$4.1 million to 832 youth shooting teams across the nation, the largest grant payout in the foundation's history.

The funds will assist approximately 37,000 youth shooting athletes, covering expenses such as ammunition, targets, travel, entry fees, team gear and more. MidwayUSA Foundation paid an average grant of \$4,953 per endowment in this grant cycle.

"We use the foundation in everything we do, whether it's travel, training, competitions, ammo, gear (or) equipment. Our team knows the money will be there annually to help us with the various expenses associated with having a shooting team," said Michael Elam, head coach of Shotgun Sports at Lindenwood University.

As a team's endowment grows, so does its annual cash grant. Each grant is 5% of the team's MidwayUSA Foundation Team Endowment balance, and the foundation offers various resources to help shooting teams increase their endowment. Every team can receive tax-deductible donations through the foundation's website at www.midwayusafoundation.org/findateamfundateam.

Online donations made to youth shooting teams are matched through



The University of Arizona WildGats collegiate shooting team was one of the many recipients of the MidwayUSA Foundation's largest grant payout in its history. Pictured: Coach Collin Rogow, WildGats academic advisor (left), times a competitor running a CMMG Pistol Caliber Carbine during her course of fire.

MidwayUSA Foundation's current matching program, funded by Larry and Brenda Potterfield, owners of MidwayUSA.

In addition to cash grants, teams are eligible to receive product grants to conduct fundraisers. Teams choose the products and host a fundraiser in their communities. Proceeds are split, half staying with the team for immediate expenses, and the other half going to its team endowment to be matched. Available product grants may be seen at

the foundation's website.

The MidwayUSA Foundation is a 501(c)(3) public charity working to sustain and grow youth shooting sports by providing long-term funding to youth shooting teams. Donations are tax deductible, and allow the foundation to assist in expanding and enhancing the leadership skills, confidence and discipline of today's youth through shooting sports activities. The foundation supports all shooting disciplines. [/ midwayusafoundation.org](http://midwayusafoundation.org)

KIMBER SPEARHEADS FIREARMS, ACCESSORIES DONATIONS TO UKRAINE

Kimber Manufacturing Inc. has donated 200 R7Mako pistols and 20 rifles (10 Advanced Tactical rifles in .308 Win., and 10 bolt-action rifles in .308 Win.) to the Ukrainian Ministry of Defense and Armed Forces of Ukraine.

Leupold & Stevens Inc. is supplying Mark 4 LR/T 3.5-10x40 scopes for each of the rifles, and Mission First Tactical (MFT) donated holsters for the pistols and Tactical Rifle Cases. In addition, MFT donated 3,300 AR-15 magazines and 1,000 AR-10 magazines.

Kimber officials say they were inspired to help by the courage and determination of the Ukrainian people who have inspired the world.

"The people of Ukraine are enduring tremendous hardships, and are in need



Kimber R7 Mako

of support from around the world," said Leslie Edelman, Kimber owner and CEO. "Kimber is honored to play a part in providing this much-needed assistance with the donation of these firearms and

accessories. Our hearts and prayers go out to the courageous people who will be using them to defend their freedom and nation." / kimberamerica.com

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ATN RELOCATES TO FLORIDA

American Technologies Network Corp. (ATN) announced it has relocated its headquarters and manufacturing facilities from California to southern Florida to accommodate the company's growth since its founding in 1995.

"This move is a continuation of ATN's mission to bring feature-rich products to market. Innovation is central to ATN, and this new step allows the company to deliver the highest-quality products to its



ATN's new facility is located at 2400 NW 95th Ave., Doral, FL 33172.

customers in a more efficient manner," said Marc Vayn, CMO of ATN.

The new Florida facility features a technically advanced manufacturing floor, expansive warehouse, streamlined

shipping area, improved warranty center and high-tech R&D facilities. All of these improvements will allow the company to better serve its customers now and in the future. / atncorp.com

VIGILANT GEAR HOLDINGS ACQUIRES PRIMARY WEAPONS SYSTEMS

Georgia-based Vigilant Gear Holdings has completed its acquisition of Boise, Idaho-headquartered Primary Weapons Systems Inc. (PWS).

The largest firearms manufacturer in Idaho today, PWS was established in 2008.

"The values of PWS have always been innovation, quality and customer service.

These values will continue to define PWS as it grows, and I feel confident Vigilant Gear Holdings will only grow these values and expand the reach of the PWS brand," said Dean Sylvester, founder of PWS.

Vigilant Gear Holdings has invested capital into PWS through its purchase of a titanium and stainless-steel 3D printer and a barrel blank manufacturing cell. This equipment will allow PWS to manufacture more than 90% of its components in-house.

"PWS is known as an evolutionary design and manufacturing company.



Our goal is to continue pushing the envelope, while keeping the core values of the organization. We have a variety of innovative new products releasing throughout 2022, and we are excited to branch out to different sectors in the firearms market," said Vigilant Holdings CEO Nate Treadaway.

/ primaryweapons.com

BERETTA HOLDING ACQUIRES RUAG AMMOTEC

Beretta Holding announced it has signed a binding agreement to acquire 100% of RUAG Ammotec, the leading European provider of small-caliber ammunition manufacturing and distribution. RUAG Ammotec owns brands such as RWS, Norma, Rottweil and Geco.

"We warmly welcome the more than 2,700 employees of RUAG Ammotec to our group, having worked almost three years on this project. During this time, we have clearly recognized RUAG Ammotec is a very good cultural fit with our group, and a strong, competent and experienced management is in place," said Pietro Gussalli Beretta, president and CEO of Beretta Holding.

Beretta also pointed out the excellent strategic fit and "strong synergies" between RUAG Ammotec and the Beretta Holding companies.



"We have the firearms and the optics, RUAG Ammotec has the ammo, (and) there is almost no overlap. This new addition to our group will add a substantial number of high-end brands to our existing portfolio of premium brands," Beretta said.

With the RUAG Ammotec acquisition, Beretta Holding will grow to over 6,000

people through more than 50 subsidiaries all over the world.

Beretta Holding and RUAG International have applied for mandatory governmental approvals. Beretta Holding expects to take full ownership of RUAG Ammotec later this year. No terms and conditions of the transaction were disclosed. / beretta.com

Once its acquisition of RUAG Ammotec is complete, Beretta Holding will grow to a company of 6,000+ and have 50+ subsidiaries around the world.

NEW PARTNERSHIPS

PR & MARKETING

APEX Ammunition announced a partnership with **Shannon Jackson Public Relations** (SJPR). SJPR will lead media relations for APEX and assist the company with strategic planning, partnerships and overall marketing efforts to grow brand awareness and sales.

LUCID Optics teamed up with **Blue August** for assistance with public and media relations through brand awareness, event promotion and industry presence. In addition, Blue August will assist **Wolf Premium Oils**, as well as **RSW Group** and its companies **RSW Aviation**, **Profense** and **North Star Arms** in the same capacity.

CMC Triggers Corp. signed **Laura Burgess Marketing** (LBM) to assist its public relations efforts and expand awareness of the CMC Triggers brand. **SOUSA Optics** (formerly Sun Optics USA) will be announcing new products and incentives through its partnership with LBM, as well. **Andro Corp. Industries** and **San Tan Tactical** have also hired LBM to manage press and writer relations.

Polymer80 Inc. entered into a relationship with **Hunter Outdoor Communications** (HOC) regarding press releases and news dissemination. HOC was also named the agency of record for **AG Composites** and **WildEar by CavCom**.

1791 Gunleather, **Victory Archery** and **Full Range Hanging Systems** have renewed partnerships with **RubLine Marketing** to manage each company's branding and marketing efforts. A new partnership, **Antler King** has signed on with RubLine Marketing for its branding and marketing.

Offensive Marketing Group teamed up with **Dillon Rifle Company** to produce four product-launch videos for the OPAR Pre-Stage Drop-In Trigger.

Swanson Russell was selected as public relations agency for **onX Hunt**. **Silencer Central** also selected Swanson Russell as its marketing agency of record to assist with brand management and product marketing.

Benelli USA retained **Media Direct Creative Group** as its public relations agency of record for management of the company's initiatives and those of Benelli USA's family of brands, including Benelli, Franchi, Stoeger, Uberti USA and Chapuis.

BONE-DRI selected **Harris Global Marketing & Communications** as its agency of record for

public relations for its entire product line.

Simulation Training Group, **GARTORZ Eyewear** and **Pnuma Outdoors** each selected **Chevalier Advertising & Public Relations** to act as the agency of record and perform strategic public relations duties.

Source Outdoor Group announced new partnerships with **NEBO**, **Outguided** and **Warthog Sharpeners** to provide a variety of marketing and communications services.

SALES REPRESENTATION

Comp-Tac partnered with **Murski Breeding Sales** for representation of its line of holsters and new products.

Nosler Inc. hired **Northern Exposure Sporting Group** for sales representation and support in Canada.

Caracal USA selected **William J. Gartland & Assoc.** and **JES Marketing** for representation of its products in all 50 states. William J. Gartland & Associates covers 37 states, while JES Marketing handles 11 western states as well as Alaska and Hawaii.

DISTRIBUTION

Davidson's announce the addition of **Trailblazer Firearms** to its growing product-line family and the initial offering, Trailblazer's LifeCard pistol.

Crow Shooting Supply wholesale customers can now choose from the full lineup of **Colt** firearms.

Safariland Armor, a brand of The Safariland Group, announced a national sales and distribution agreement with **Busch PROtective** for the company's helmets and accessories.

Sports South LLC and **Heritage Manufacturing Inc.** teamed up to design and create the Heritage Barkeep, a single-action revolver with Old West flare, is now available from Sports South. Additionally, Sports South is now distributing a **Landon Arms** STX 604 shotgun with an exclusive natural camouflage stock.

Chattanooga Shooting Supplies Inc. now offers products from **Templar Knives** to its customer base.

Iron Valley Supply has partnered with **Christensen Arms** to distribute its complete line of firearms.



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PRIMARY ARMS OPTICS MOVES TO NEW FACILITY

Primary Arms Optics announced the completion of its move to a new 50,000-sq. ft. facility, located near the company's Houston-based headquarters.

The new facility expands Primary Arms' operational and logistical potential. Separate from the company's retail operations, the new facility supports additional engineering and quality-control staff.

The building features a state-of-the-art clean room, taking the company's optics projects to a new level. Additional warehouse space will also allow Primary Arms to maintain its fast shipping speeds for optics dealers, both within the U.S. and abroad.

"This move is a defining development for our company. With the new facility, Primary Arms Optics will now be able to undertake advanced manufacturing projects that were just not possible in the old facility, while expanding support for our growing dealer network both in the U.S. and internationally," said Marshall



Primary Arms' new facility will enable the company to expand support for its growing dealer network, according to Founder and CEO Marshall Lerner.

Lerner, founder and CEO of Primary Arms.

Primary Arms Optics offers a comprehensive selection of riflescopes, prism scopes, red-dot sights, optic mounts and accessories. Its Advanced Combined Sighting System (ACSS) is a high-performance reticle solution to the challenges of modern marksmanship,

distilling complex mathematics into intuitive holdovers that enhance speed and precision. Primary Arms produces several tiers of products to meet the needs of any budget, and all products come with a lifetime warranty.

[/primaryarms.com](https://primaryarms.com)

NEWSWEEK NAMES VISTA OUTDOOR IN LIST OF TRUSTWORTHY COMPANIES

Vista Outdoor Inc. announced it was named to *Newsweek's* 2022 list of America's Most Trustworthy Companies.

The prestigious award is presented by *Newsweek* and Statista Inc., a leading statistics portal and industry-ranking provider. The awards list features 400 companies across 22 industries. Vista Outdoor was one of just 25 consumer goods companies selected.

"Our company prioritizes building trust with our employees, customers and investors. Everything we do centers on the people-first culture we strive to create. It infuses how we design and sell products

customers rely on, the way we interact internally with our more than 6,000 employees and the integrity that guides our customer, supplier and investor relationships. Trust is a trait we value greatly, and it's one we strive to uphold in all aspects of our business," said Chris Metz, CEO of Vista Outdoor.

Vista Outdoor's brands and employees also promote a culture of trust through the Vista Outdoor Corporate Responsibility values — sustainability, community, safety and the Vista Outdoor Foundation. Those values drive the belief that business success can leverage positive change and impact in the world.

America's Most Trustworthy Companies 2022 were identified in an independent survey based on a vast sample of approximately 50,000 U.S. residents, who rated companies they know



on three touchpoints of trust — customer trust, investor trust and employee trust. A total of 110,000 evaluations were submitted. All stock exchange-listed companies with revenue of more than \$500 million in 2020 were considered in the study, which was conducted in the third quarter of 2021.

Vista Outdoor is the parent company of more than three-dozen well-known brands that design, manufacture and market sporting and outdoor products.

[/vistaoutdoor.com](https://vistaoutdoor.com)

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BROWNELLS ANNOUNCES WA. STATE "MAG DUMP" PROMOTION

In response to the standard-capacity magazine ban passed in Washington state, Brownells announced it will donate \$2 to the Washington-based Second Amendment Foundation (SAF) for every aluminum Brownells AR-15 magazine sold. The SAF is currently planning to file a lawsuit against the state of Washington on behalf of gun owners in the state.

The Brownells "Mag Dump" donation event lasts through June 24, and has two goals. The first is to help Washington state gun owners procure reliable, proven, standard-capacity magazines for their AR-15 style firearms before the ban goes into effect. The second is to supply cash to the Second Amendment Foundation that will be earmarked to help fund its lawsuit to be filed against the ban on all magazines holding more than 10 rounds.

"Brownells provides the products Americans need to exercise their Second Amendment rights and freedoms," said Brownells Chairman Pete Brownell. "We're proud to partner with groups like the Second Amendment Foundation to help fight for those rights and freedoms."

The Brownells magazines eligible for the \$2 donation include Grey Aluminum Magazines and Tan Magazines in single, 10, 20 and 100 quantities.

The SAF is dedicated to promoting a better understanding of the Constitutional heritage to privately own and possess firearms. The SAF has many educational and legal action programs designed to better inform the public about the gun control debate.

[/ brownells.com](http://brownells.com) / saf.org 



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J. PORLIER

TAURUS ADDS VP, DIRECTOR

Taurus announced Justin Porlier was hired as VP of sales, and welcomed Cody Osborn as marketing director for the Taurus, Rossi and Heritage Manufacturing brands.



C. OSBORN

Porlier leads all the domestic sales efforts for the Taurus, Heritage Manufacturing and Rossi brands.

Porlier most recently served as regional sales manager for Dunkin Lewis Inc., and held positions at Walther Arms, Bear Archery, Crimson Trace and Mossy Oak Apparel.

Osborn is responsible for defining and implementing yearly marketing plans, new product launches, public relations, product development and advertising.

Prior to joining Taurus, Osborn was the marketing manager for Walther Arms.

He earned a B.A. and M.A. from Texas A&M University, and is a USPSA and IDPA competitor.



G. JIN

PRIMARY ARMS TAPS CREATIVE MANAGER

Primary Arms welcomed Grace Jin as a creative manager where

she oversees most creative media, including photography, videography and graphics design and assists with elevating key brand elements, including packaging, advertising and product presentation.

Ken Ross, Primary Arms' director of outbound marketing, said, "Her creativity and drive will be essential to the team's performance, and we look forward to showcasing her expertise throughout Primary Arms' brands."

Jin brings over 15 years of experience in graphic design, specializing in brand development and high-performance digital marketing to her new role.



K. RICKER

TRADITIONS PERFORMANCE FIREARMS NAMES, PROMOTES MANAGERS

Traditions Performance Firearms announced Karl Ricker has joined its team as senior product development manager, and



B. WELLS

Brenna Wells was promoted to inside sales manager.

During his 31-year career, Ricker has worked with manufacturers such as Thompson Center and Smith & Wesson.

Wells, who has been with Traditions for 22 years, oversees the inside sales department team and is responsible for managing all internal sales processes, account management and sales order processes.



M. SCELZA

SAR USA TAPS NATIONAL SALES MANAGER

In his new role as national sales manager for SAR USA, Mark

Scelza will oversee the growth and expansion of the company's national account base by developing and implementing key strategic incentives.

Joaquin Fernandez, director of finance and accounting for SAR USA, said, "[To] keep up with growth, we are adding key positions to help guide us along the way. Mark's experience and vision he brings will serve him well in his new role."

Prior to joining SAR USA, Scelza held national sales manager positions at Barrett Manufacturing and SIG SAUER.



R. MCCANNA

WALTHER ARMS APPOINTS CEO

As part of a long-term strategic transition for former Walther Arms CEO,

Adam Blalock, to serve as chairman of the board for Walther Arms and Umarex USA, as well as president and CEO of Walther Manufacturing, Rob McCanna was promoted to president and CEO.

"Rob is perfectly suited for this transition to CEO of Walther Arms. He has the aptitude and experience combined with a demonstrated performance in his current role. I look forward to seeing Walther thrive under Rob's leadership," said Blalock.

McCanna has 35 years of experience in the firearms industry. He has spent the past 12 years in various senior leadership roles.



D. SALAZAR

CPG APPOINTS EXPORT SALES MANAGER

Capstone Precision Group (CPG), manufacturer and distributor of

Berger bullets and ammunition, appointed Daniel Salazar its new export sales manager.

Salazar holds a degree in administration and has 20+ years of experience working for international companies in the U.S., Canada, Colombia, Venezuela, Mexico and UAE within the energy sector. Salazar recently achieved Master class designation, and is a rifle silhouette competitor.

XS SIGHTS ADVANCES STAFF

XS Sights announced the promotion of Richard Wiese to tritium manager/ production supervisor, and Jared Fewell to customer service and sight installation tech.

Previously the tritium product manager, Wiese is now responsible for all daily



R. WIESE

operations of the tritium and production areas, supervising production area staff and overseeing production schedules to ensure all parts and final production meet XS' standards.



J. FEWELL

Fewell has been with XS Sights for nearly 10 years, and will be instrumental in the customer service department and lend his expertise to sight installation, greet walk-in customers and handle order entry and order processing



C. DAVENPORT

IRON VALLEY SUPPLY CO. NAMES VP

Iron Valley Supply Co. announced the promotion of Chris Davenport to VP of merchandising from

his previous role as buyer.

Before to his start at Iron Valley, Davenport served as a product line manager for Palmetto State Armory, and as a category manager/buyer for United Sporting Companies.

Davenport is a graduate of Clemson University.



N. STEPHANY

RUBLINE MARKETING ADDS CONTENT COORDINATOR

RubLine Marketing welcomed Nathan Stephany as its creative content coordinator

where he will use his skills and expertise to produce photo and video assets, create compelling brand messaging and develop visual marketing strategies for a variety of clients.

Stephany earned a degree in journalism and communications

from Wartburg College. He previously worked as a director for Knight Vision Films.



B. KLEFTIS

OTIS TECHNOLOGY ANNOUNCES CEO

Bill Kleftis was appointed Otis Technology's new CEO where he will oversee Otis Technology,

Shooter's Choice and DRD Tactical. Outgoing CEO, Larry Williams, resumed his role on Otis Technology's advisory board and remains active in the company's operations through various projects and efforts.

Kleftis previously held executive leadership roles at Engineering Manufacturing Technologies LLC, New York Air Brake and Carlin Combustion. He is a certified Agile Scrum Master and Lean champion. **SI**

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BY MASSAD AYOUB

GLOBAL EVENTS IMPACT DEFENSE NEEDS AT HOME

I come from the generation that grew up huddling under elementary school desks doing “atomic bomb drills.” The fear of World War III had Americans preparing their basements as makeshift bomb shelters, and the wealthier building *actual* bomb shelters. Our parents were advised to keep a shotgun handy, because when society broke down, starving people would be willing to kill them and their family for whatever cans of tuna fish they might have in the pantry.

Flash-forward to March 2022: A report attributed to the Red Cross said starving Ukrainians in Mariupol were attacking each other for food.

Today, all of us have lived — and are living — through the pandemic. You’ve seen the effect of recent events on your sales in the past two years. At its onset, officials predicted COVID-19 would take so many emergency services workers off the streets they wouldn’t be able to respond to life-threatening crises. At the same time, a series of events ignited by social justice warriors turned into riots that burned cities, which truly did take away police departments’ abilities to respond to the usual list of serious crimes. Millions of people realized for the first time they were “on their own” ... and came to your gun shop.

ON THE BRINK

I’m writing this mid-March 2022. For the past couple of weeks, pundits have warned we’re on the brink of World War III yet again. And other circumstances are in play. Skyrocketing inflation. Trucker strikes in the news, in a society that will quickly experience famine if food supply lines are shut down.

These are times that conjure unpleasant scenarios. We’re closer to nuclear war than any time since the Cuban Missile Crisis. I for one don’t see *Red Dawn* suddenly becoming a reality. But after seeing the takeover of police stations and whole neighborhoods in the Pacific Northwest, and a lot of law enforcement agencies *themselves* broadcasting the “You’re on your own” message, I think a lot of people see *Escape From New York* as a plausible preview of coming events.

Societal breakdown predictions make unarmed people finally want guns and ammunition, and makes armed people want to enlarge their stockpile of emergency equipment. I don’t make predictions, but I wouldn’t be surprised to see another spike in sales of defensive firearms, ammunition and related accessories.

POSSIBLE SILVER LINING

One possible silver lining for gun retailers in the dark clouds of current events is rampant inflation may put ammo prices in perspective. A day rarely goes by when a customer doesn’t complain about the cost of ammunition — the “100-pack of Winchester White Box 9mm for \$10 at Walmart” of 20 years ago seems like yesterday to some shooters who are horrified at paying \$20 or more for a box of 50 today.

But look at the horrifying degree to which gasoline and diesel fuel have skyrocketed. Food is up precipitously. All of a sudden, the ammo prices we’ve all been grumbling about seem to be in line with the rest of the economy.

That said, though, it’s possible the cost of ammo (and unavailability) may be on us again due to these current events.

Consider the following:

- Those who live near military bases report a ramping up of training. Expect more small-arms ammunition production to be diverted to the military.



Just when it looked as if ammo supplies were coming back and prices were going to stabilize, there are events and influences in play — which could create another ammo drought as bad as the last one, or worse.

• At the same time, cargo ships are waiting to be unloaded — the “supply line” crisis continues. In addition to which ...

• Components and raw materials are much in demand and have increased significantly in price.

• Hoarders were a problem during the past two years of the ammunition crunch. More indications of a destabilized society will only drive those

folks to hoard still more.

- A substantial amount of ammo production is likely to be diverted to Ukraine, and indeed, already has — with a couple manufacturers (Ammo Inc. and Federal) sharing donations of a million rounds each.

Yes, just when it looked as if ammo supplies were coming back and prices were going to stabilize, there are events and influences in play — which could create another ammo drought as bad as the last one, or worse.

JOIN A FOREIGN LEGION?

At this writing, the Ukrainian Embassy in Washington, D.C., has a recruitment center for Americans who want to go to Ukraine to fight the invading Russians. Six thousand have asked about joining up so far, according to Snopes, and there will probably be many more by the time you read this.

Snopes warned, “Under some circumstances, Americans could face criminal penalties, or even risk losing

their citizenship, by taking part in an overseas conflict, according to a senior federal law enforcement official.” The report added, “(Recruits) will be required to sign a contract to serve, without pay, in the International Legion for the Territorial Defense of Ukraine.”

The Ukrainians want volunteers to bring their own “protective gear” (i.e., body armor, helmets, night vision equipment, the whole nine yards). But *no weapons!*

Of course, you might want to tell any customer who wants to go to Ukraine to kill Russians he won’t be looked upon favorably if he’s captured, and he may not be given Prisoner of War status. He may instead become the focus of an international incident in a time when more provocation is not needed, creating a situation where American servicemen might have to die to rescue him.


Now, the relatively few people who will sign up to leave the U.S. to fight in Ukraine will be in the market for this sort of equipment (if they don’t have

it already). But really, the market for it is here in the U.S. If you think about it, any situation requiring Americans to go out in the streets of their communities carrying an AR-15 would be a situation in which one would want armor, night vision, etc., too.


Your predictions are as good as mine. Maybe better. The bottom line is this: when both world *and* national events portend terrible things that can put people on their own in a violent world, those people start looking toward personal-protection firearms.


You are selling them peace of mind and a sense of security in a troubled world. **SI**


Editor’s Note: This story first appeared online as “The Impact Of What’s Going On In Ukraine,” promoted in the Dealer Advantage email distributed March 21, 2022. To sign up for Dealer Advantage, visit shootingindustry.com.





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MSRP: \$559.00

PRODUCT DETAILS

Model Specific: MAX-9
Safety: Manual Safety
Frame Finish: Black
Front Sight: Tritium Fiber Optic
Rear Sight: Drift Adjustable

PRODUCT DESCRIPTION

- Striker-fired with a short, smooth trigger pull, clean break and positive reset.
- Slim, lightweight and compact for personal protection.
- Rugged construction with through-hardened alloy steel slide; one-piece, precision-machined fire control chassis; and high-performance, glass-filled nylon grip frame.
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BY ASHLEY MCGEE

7 COMMON MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT FEMALE SHOOTERS

You've likely already seen the statistics, but the latest retailer survey from the National Shooting Sports Foundation (NSSF) revealed an estimated 5.4 million people purchased a firearm for the first time in 2021, accounting for nearly 30% of all firearm purchases.

According to the same survey, of the 5.4 million first-time gun buyers, more than 33% were women — a conservative number compared to the 2021 National Firearms Survey that showed close to half of all new U.S. gun buyers since the beginning of 2019 have been women.

There's no disputing the undeniable shift in the once male-dominated market and it's time to finally put some of the common misconceptions about female gun owners to rest.

We reached out to more than a dozen women (and some men) in the industry including dealers, firearm instructors, manufacturers, competitive shooters and hunters, to share the biggest misconceptions about women and guns they hear most often. Here are seven, in no particular order.

1. Women need smaller-caliber weapons to be able to physically control them.

The notion that women need smaller-caliber weapons, or some

similar variation to this statement, was by far the most frequent response received.

Ronald Wright, who works for Frontier Justice, said it was the most overheard comment from the past 20–24 months.

The misconception stems from the idea “most women have small hands and limited hand strength, making smaller frames and lower calibers a preferred option,” said Trish Harrold, lead instructor at Frontier Justice's location in Omaha, Neb.

The reality is women are capable of shooting the same guns as men. Women come in all shapes and sizes, and just like men, the best fit will depend on each individual and their preferences — not their gender.

Plus, as we all know, small does not mean low recoil, which is what many women, particularly first-time gun buyers, are looking for.

2. Revolvers are the best handguns for women.

“The biggest misconception I hear is female shooters need something ‘simple’ like a revolver and if they are shown a semi-automatic handgun they will get confused,” said Maxx Tate, assistant manager at Frontier Justice. “That’s absurd, and it’s mainly their husband or

◀ If you can avoid perpetuating some of the misconceptions about women listed below, your store will set itself apart from the competition. Remember, women know quickly whether or not they’re welcome in your store. (Photo: Shoot United)

boyfriend pushing them in this direction. Most of the time, after showing them some kind of semi-automatic pistol they love it, and generally can use it more proficiently than the person who brought them in.”

This falsehood is not only an insult to women's intelligence, but also ties into the misconception women are not strong enough to work an action.

“A lot of women who have come to me after buying a revolver because it was recommended to them have found they dislike them after getting familiar with them,” said Debbie Rose, a retired New York State Police investigator and founder of firearms instruction company Girls Shoot Guns Too.

“Many women find revolvers are not comfortable and are very ‘snappy’ due to the size of gun and barrel length, particularly .38 Specials,” she added.



The notion that women need smaller-caliber weapons, or some similar variation to this statement, was by far the most frequent response received.

3. Women can't shoot as well as men.

The idea women can't shoot as well as men is unequivocally false. In fact, most shooting instructors, both men and women, will happily tell you women are *better* shooters than men. While there isn't any science to support either claim, there are endless anecdotes to support the latter.

A few years ago, a 27-year U.S. Army marksmanship instructor shared his thoughts in an article published on NRAFamily.com.

“As a military logistician, my units had around 20% female personnel in both officer and enlisted ranks. All the women fired Expert their first day, but

less than a third of the men did so,” said retired Col. Kenneth Haynes. “Several men had to retrain and repeat the course to qualify. This pattern continued when the 9mm replaced the .45 in 1985 until I retired in 1997. It also appeared differences in musculature and hand size had no effect on the scores.”

Col. Haynes also admitted his wife and both of his daughters can outshoot him.

The truth is men and women are equal in terms of the ability and physical skills needed to learn to shoot. The differentiator is women tend to be more coachable. They are more open-minded, listen better, have fewer preconceived notions and their egos don't get in the way as much.

4. Women require special gear.

If you weren't already aware, it's time to abandon the “shrink it and pink it” strategy when it comes to marketing firearms to women.

“So many companies market different colored holsters and accessories specifically to women, but I know many men who like the interesting colors as well,” said Tammy Bartels, director of training at Frontier Justice. “Women don't require any special gear.”

Bartels added she personally uses the exact same types of gear her male counterparts in the training sphere use.

As far as training goes, women don't need special classes or training.

“While there is some value in women-only classes to help ease those unsure of themselves into training, most women I know (myself included) who are serious about firearms and personal protection advocate for coed training,” said Bartels. “If a woman is going to have to defend herself, it will likely be against a man who is bigger and stronger than her. It's important to be realistic about your abilities and to get a little uncomfortable to see how you will react under duress.”

5. Women who conceal carry are scared or paranoid.

Amy Robbins, CEO and co-founder of Alexo Athletica, said one of the most common misconceptions she hears

about women who carry a firearm is they do so because they're paranoid.

Arguably the most frustrating part of this misconception isn't that it's not true, it's that no one would ever make the same claim about men.

Men and women don't carry because they are paranoid; they carry because they want to be prepared and equipped to take control of their life.



Men and women don't carry because they are paranoid; they carry because they want to be prepared and equipped to take control of their life.

6. Women can't shoot while pregnant.

While there are some precautions or adaptations women may need to make, it doesn't mean they have to give up shooting entirely during pregnancy.

Jen O'Hara, co-founder of Girls with Guns Clothing has shot and instructed students up until 24 weeks of her pregnancy.

“I am cautious with handling lead and eating or touching my face, and because I teach around 50 students a month,” she said.

O'Hara did eventually have to quit teaching at a certain point in her pregnancy because of the continuous noise in utero, but does a lot of dry-fire to keep her skills fresh.

Pregnancy hasn't stopped her from hunting either. When we reached out for comment on this article, she was gearing up to head to Hawaii for an Axis hunt during which she'd be in her third trimester.

(I was glad when Jen brought this point up, as I read and heard many of the same things when I was pregnant with my first child. One of my favorite photos from that pregnancy was taken while deer hunting at 34 weeks.

Admittedly, I did opt to hunt from ground blinds versus treestands and used pregnancy as an opportunity to learn how to hunt with a compound bow.)

7. Women can shoot their gun through a concealed carry purse.

This misconception is more about gear marketed toward women rather than female shooters themselves, but it's still an important claim to clear up.

Maria Dockery, president of Femme Fatale ARMS & Training, shares why women shouldn't fall prey to this relatively common marketing tactic.


“First, if you have a semi-automatic it will not cycle properly and will leave your gun unable to fire another shot without manipulating the firearm,” she said. “All you've done is deploy a loud sound maker in your purse.”

“Second,” she continued, “the bullet will not travel in the direction you intend it to go. It's traveling through leather, zipper, etc., meaning it's highly unlikely you will strike your attacker.”

“Third, you'll ruin your purse! And purses aren't cheap,” she said. “Lastly, you may set your purse on fire ... then again, a crazy woman swinging a flaming purse may be quite effective in deterring an attacker.”

SILVER LINING

As disappointing as it is to realize these misconceptions, stereotypes and generalizations are still as widespread as they are in 2022. Still, 5.11 Chief Marketing Officer Debra Radcliff offered a hopeful sentiment about the current and future direction the industry is taking.

“We feel the industry as a whole has become so welcoming and supportive of women adopting the sport in recent years,” she said. “If anything, there is now, more than ever, a heightened enthusiasm, greater encouragement and increased opportunities for women to receive proper education around firearm safety.” 

Dealers, have your say — what other misconceptions would you add here? Email comments@shootingindustry.com.

BEST PRACTICES



BY CAROLEE ANITA BOYLES

GETTING MORE OUT OF SELLING GUNS ONLINE

Selling guns online isn't new. Many retailers have their own websites where they list guns and gun parts, and GunBroker.com has been hosting firearms auctions for more than 20 years. With the onset of COVID, however, online sales of everything have skyrocketed, and firearms are not an exception.

SELLING 24/7

Chris Mayhall, owner of Intrepid Shooting Sports in Fort Worth, Texas, said maintaining an online site allows him to sell firearms 24 hours a day, and reach customers much farther away than his local community.

"As a local gun store, you're only going to have customers in about an 8-mile radius," he noted. "So now, when we get really cool, interesting items, we can share them with the whole country. We can have clients and build relationship in other states. Selling online connects you with more people."

Having an online presence has allowed Mayhall to take in more of a variety of firearms because he isn't limited to local clientele.

"We can expand and experiment with different and interesting guns because we can sell nationwide," he said. "For instance, turkey guns don't do very well for us here, but they do in other parts of the country."

Mayhall maintains a number of listings on GunBroker.com at all times.

He uses GunBroker.com because he feels it gets the widest exposure of any of the online auction sites.

"GunBroker.com gets the most eyeballs," he confirmed. "We've sold on some other websites, but it just seems like the interface with GunBroker.com is the most streamlined, and it gets the most traffic of all those websites."

One downside to selling guns online, Mayhall declared, is the price point for new guns.

"When it's the newest, hottest item — the most recent example being the Springfield SA-35 — right when it gets released, everybody wants them," he said. "The MSRP on the SA-35 is \$699, but you couldn't find one on GunBroker.com for less than \$1,000 at first — and it continues to be like that. When they're new and hot, they're really good. But fast-forward eight months to when hot SKUs are all over the place and everyone who wanted one has gotten one, then I have to compete with 500 other people who have the same gun at the same price."

Mayhall believes GunBroker.com tends to get saturated with drop-shippers.

"Dealing with that is the biggest challenge for local gun stores," he asserted. "They never physically possess the firearm, and they didn't have to buy it until it's sold. I don't know how you compete against someone who doesn't care about their profit margins."

ADDED VOLUME BRINGS ADDED REVENUE

Richard Sprague, owner of Sprague's Sports in Yuma, Ariz., has been selling firearms on Guns.com since the middle of 2021. He shared the main reason for selling guns online is added volume.

"With added volume comes added revenue," he said. "I think a lot of gun shops are going this way; it's just the way commerce is evolving. And customers are coming to expect it — you need to be in this space. You need to have your in-store inventory online and you need to advertise in specialty areas."

Sprague has taken a three-pronged approach to selling online. First, he has his own website (spragues.com). He also has an affiliation through Gearfire, so he has an online shop there.

"Our Gearfire shop contains our live inventory from the store, and also what's available from us," he said. "If you want to survive and thrive, you have to take a multidisciplinary approach like this."

The third leg of Sprague's internet-marketing stool is through Guns.com.

"They have a great marketing platform and a great domain name that's pretty hard to beat," he stated. "They offer a white-glove service to both the retailer and the consumer. They deal with brick-and-mortar stores only, and they take a lot of the headaches out of transfers."

Guns.com has arrangements with many FFLs to handle transfers so customers don't have to search for an FFL to handle a transfer for a firearm purchased online.

"Shipping also is not a concern," Sprague added. "It's all included in the sale. Guns.com is very efficient, reliable and easy to work with."

Guns.com started in 2011 as a place where firearms enthusiasts could go for news, product reviews and information on issues affecting the gun community. It gradually evolved into an online marketplace based on ease of use and convenience to both the customer and the retailer.

"Jeff Tesch, their director of business development, has 20 years in the industry and knows it inside and out," Sprague said. "Our association with them has worked out really well."

BOTTOM LINE BOOST

Sprague shared adding an online segment to his business has improved his

bottom line in several ways. One, it's a good avenue by which to clear out excess inventory.

"Sometimes you realize you only need two of something — rather than the six you have on the shelf," he informed. "Selling items like it online can add up to real money."

Having an online presence also gives you broader exposure for unusual or hard-to-find items.

“

With added volume comes added revenue. I think a lot of gun shops are going this way; it's just the way commerce is evolving. And customers are coming to expect it — you need to be in this space. You need to have your in-store inventory online and you need to advertise in specialty areas."

Richard Sprague, Owner
Sprague's Sports, Yuma, Ariz.

"Selling online gives you more opportunity for it than your local market does," Sprague observed. "All of this has the potential to add up fairly quickly to 10% or more of your gross revenues. But it depends on how much time and attention you pay to it. The broader an inventory selection you have, the better you'll do."

Retailers need to go into online sales with an understanding of the costs involved, Sprague advised.

"You need to know what's needed to maintain your operation," he counseled. "If you don't like the price being offered or if it doesn't fit your business model at the time — because it's an average or an aggregate price of dealers who have guns for sale — then you don't have to sell there. Just pass

on the opportunity."

Sprague expects online gun sales to remain a valuable constant in the store's business model.

"Our customers seem to like it," he said. "I'm really pleased with it so far. It accounts for up to 10% of our sales on a monthly basis. We'd like to increase it, but with realistic expectations as the market changes."

A NEW OPTION

Gunspot (gunspot.com), owned by Midwest Tactical, is another auction site available to elevate the online segment of your business.

Mike Winkle, Midwest Tactical operations manager, said Midwest Tactical was selling on other auction sites, but the high fees and poor communication they experienced on those sites frustrated their staff. So, they purchased a website that included a page where users could list up to three firearms for sale and improved it, which started Gunspot.

"We've set up Gunspot so it's more affordable, high-tech and secure than other sites, and has actual customer service," Winkle noted. "All of this means more money in the seller's pocket because our fees are lower than other sites'."

Winkle shared Midwest Tactical has set up the website software to provide a service platform — meaning lower prices to buyers.

"Other sites are set up as marketplace facilitators, so they have to charge sales tax," he said. "But, because we're renting space to customers to market and sell their items, we're a lot like Square and we don't have to charge sales tax. We're trying to be a Second Amendment-friendly website providing people with an interactive platform that allows them to buy and sell in this really competitive market and pay less for their guns. It's a win-win situation for everyone." **SI**

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By Bryan Hendricks

ADDING VALUE

Accessories Accent Handgun Market

Accessories are major components in the handgun market, and red dot sights are popular, user-friendly additions.

Red dot optics constantly improve and evolve, translating to steady business and sustained consumer interest for outlets like Fort Thompson Sporting Goods of Sherwood, Ark., a popular independent store in central Arkansas.

Josh Hunter, a handgun sales specialist for Fort Thompson Sporting Goods, said customers have often predetermined their desired product. It's a mistake, in his view. Instead, he believes customers should research the sight that best suits their physical attributes or limitations.

"Everybody's eyes are a little different," Hunter observed. "A lot of people come in with their mind set on a Leupold DeltaPoint, a SIG ROMEO or whatever, but when they pick it up and look at it, it's sometimes not a good match for their eyes."

Astigmatism is a major issue for anybody considering a red dot, Hunter advised, who suffers from intense

astigmatism.

"What works best for me are the Trijicon dual-illuminated sights," said Hunter. He mounts a Trijicon RMR 12.9 MOA to his Shadow Systems MR920. "They work really well for a lot of people who have astigmatism," he continued.

Trijicon is Fort Thompson's second top-selling red dot, with the RMR 12.9 triangle heading the class. Holosun is the most popular. Rounding out the top five, in order, are the Leupold DeltaPoint, Vortex Venom and Burris FastFire. Holosun is surprisingly dominant in Fort Thompson's red dot business, thanks to a formidable combination of affordability, quality and marketing.



Co-witness capability compensates for a potential shortcoming of electronic handgun optics.

Before installing a red dot, Hunter contends a customer should master the intended firearm. It takes about 400–500 rounds for a user to establish the grip for a firearm and to instinctively develop instant iron sight alignment.

Hunter lends, “I tell everybody, ‘Look, I got no dog in this fight.

I’m more than happy to sell you whatever it is you want. But, it’s better to get proficient with the gun because when you present the firearm, if you’re not looking straight down the sights, you’re going to be hunting for those red dots. If you don’t have to do any movement in your grip at all to see straight down your irons to the target, then it’s a great time to add a red dot.”

Red dot sights are not a fad, Hunter said. They’re a trend with staying power.

“I was really resistant to red dots on pistols,” he admitted. “This whole concept of putting red dots on pistols seemed really stupid to me. I decided I was going to give this thing a legitimate shake and see how this goes, and I found I really like it. I carry it every day.”

A large red dot reticle turned out to be a practical solution for Hunter’s astigmatism.

“If I shoot my irons with both eyes open, I’ve got two rear sights, two front sights and one target,”



AMERIGLO Haven

Hunter shared, who shoots competitively. “Well, now all of sudden I’ve got one red dot and one target. It made me faster, more confident and tremendously more accurate.”

Buyers should also be aware of a red dot’s shortcomings, the most significant being battery life.

“When you go to red dot, you’re talking about an LED. You’re talking about a battery that determines whether or not you’re going to be able to hit your intended target,” Hunter explained. “It’s a very big thing, which is one reason why I gravitate toward dual-illuminated systems. It’s also why I strongly encourage people to set up a system that allows them to co-witness their iron sights. It gives them a fallback option.”

Co-witness capability also compensates for a red dot’s tendency toward dimness if you are in the dark pointing your sight toward bright light.

As with all electronics, this year’s red dot might be outclassed by next year’s products — guaranteeing churn and rotation in the inventory.

“They’re coming out with different stuff all the time,” Hunter noted. “Two years ago, you would never see a red dot with a solar backup. Now it’s pretty commonplace. Holosuns with solar backup give a little better battery life, and it uses the panel to auto adjust the brightness so the dot’s not too bright. It’s always right there in that ‘Goldilocks’ zone. It’s new stuff, so I don’t have any idea where it’s going.”

TRIGGER PHRASES

Along with red dots, handgunners around the country often upgrade their triggers with aftermarket brands. This is especially true for GLOCK owners, said Veerachart Murphy,

“**Red dot optics constantly improve and evolve, translating to steady business and sustained consumer interest.**

owner of Ammo AZ in Phoenix. According to Murphy, his working-class and middle-class clientele demand a balance of quality and economy.

“Every month is the same, always the same three brands,” Murphy noted. “It’s GLOCK, SIG and Zeus Arms.”

Never heard of Zeus Arms? It’s like a micro-armory. It’s popular in Arizona, and Murphy owns the plant.

“But number-one is GLOCK 19 and 19X. It never changes,” he said.



Holosun EPS Carry

“

With GLOCK, you’ve got 50 barrel companies and 50 trigger companies. I can upgrade my GLOCK, and it won’t look like your GLOCK.”

**VEERACHART MURPHY, OWNER
AMMO AZ**

GLOCK’s popularity is largely due to the ease of accessorizing, enabled by a vast selection of aftermarket triggers and barrels. It is to the do-it-yourself handgun community the Ruger 10/22 is to the DIY rifle community.

“I don’t know if anybody even makes a trigger for Ruger (handguns),” Murphy observed. “There might be one or two

triggers for SIG. With GLOCK, you’ve got 50 barrel companies and 50 trigger companies. There are three companies within a stone’s throw of my store that make upgraded GLOCK triggers. And, I can upgrade my GLOCK, and it won’t look like your GLOCK. Triggers are my number-one requested off-brand item.”

Murphy sells a lot of red dot sights, too. As in Arkansas, Holosun and Trijicon are very popular.

ROLL OUT THE BARRELS

GLOCK is very popular in the Detroit area for the same reasons, shared Greg Fink, an associate at Oakland Tactical, located in Howell, Mich.

“People like to customize GLOCKS because it’s so easy to do,” Fink said. “It only has 34 parts. As long as you can manipulate three pins, you can do anything with them.”

GLOCK owners are especially fond of installing threaded aftermarket barrels, Fink noted. They might not ever buy a suppressor, but they like having the ability to do so. The sweet spot for aftermarket barrels is from \$220–\$300, and Oakland Tactical sells four to 12



Josh Hunter of Fort Thompson Sporting Goods in Sherwood, Ark., educates a customer on the utility of adding a red dot optic. Though Hunter wasn’t sure about red dots initially, he’s become an ardent supporter of carrying with one — and does so himself daily.

per month.

"I sell more ZEV Technology barrels than anything," Fink said. "People like the way they look. It gets rid of the polygonal rifling GLOCKs come with, and they're really accurate. I have one on my personal gun."

Murphy, of Ammo AZ, noted his customers also tend to replace their handgun barrels with threaded models.

"They always swap out for threaded barrels," Murphy said. "I have a hard time selling an upgraded GLOCK barrel if it's

“
This whole concept of putting red dots on pistols seemed really stupid to me. I decided I was going to give this thing a legitimate shake and see how this goes, and I found I really like it. I carry it every day.”

**JOSH HUNTER,
HANDGUN SALES SPECIALIST
FORT THOMPSON SPORTING GOODS**

not threaded. It's not necessarily because they have a suppressor, but they like the aesthetics, or they plan on getting a suppressor."

GOT A LIGHT?

Lights are another increasingly popular handgun accessory, and Fink sells about a dozen a month. Generally, customers insist on lights with at least 1,000 lumens. The SureFire X300UB weaponlight and Streamlight TLRs are equally the most popular.

"It's literally one or the other," Fink stated.

MAGAZINE FEATURE

Demand for additional magazines is steady in his Phoenix location, Murphy said, and it doesn't change unless something spooks handgunners.

"If there's talk about banning high-capacity magazines because of a school shooting or a mass shooting, then we get a rush," he shared. "Other than that, magazine sales are pretty steady."

John Peeler, an associate at Doc's Guns & Ammo in the St. Louis suburb of Eureka, Mo., said demand for magazines often depends on the platform.

"A lot of firearms come with two magazines, but a lot of people want a third magazine," he said. "Some versions of the SIG P365 come with two 10-round magazines, but a lot of people like to opt for a 12- or 15-round one."

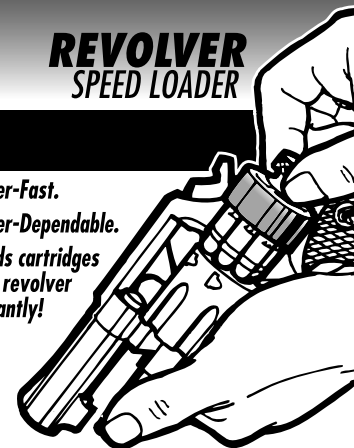
Given the desire for customization and the availability of aftermarket upgrades, segments of the handgun industry have astutely targeted the do-it-yourself segment of the market. The result is sustained growth and additional profits for retailers. **SI**

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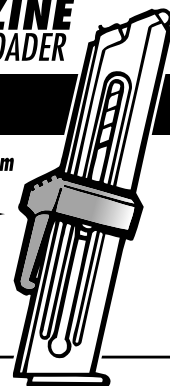
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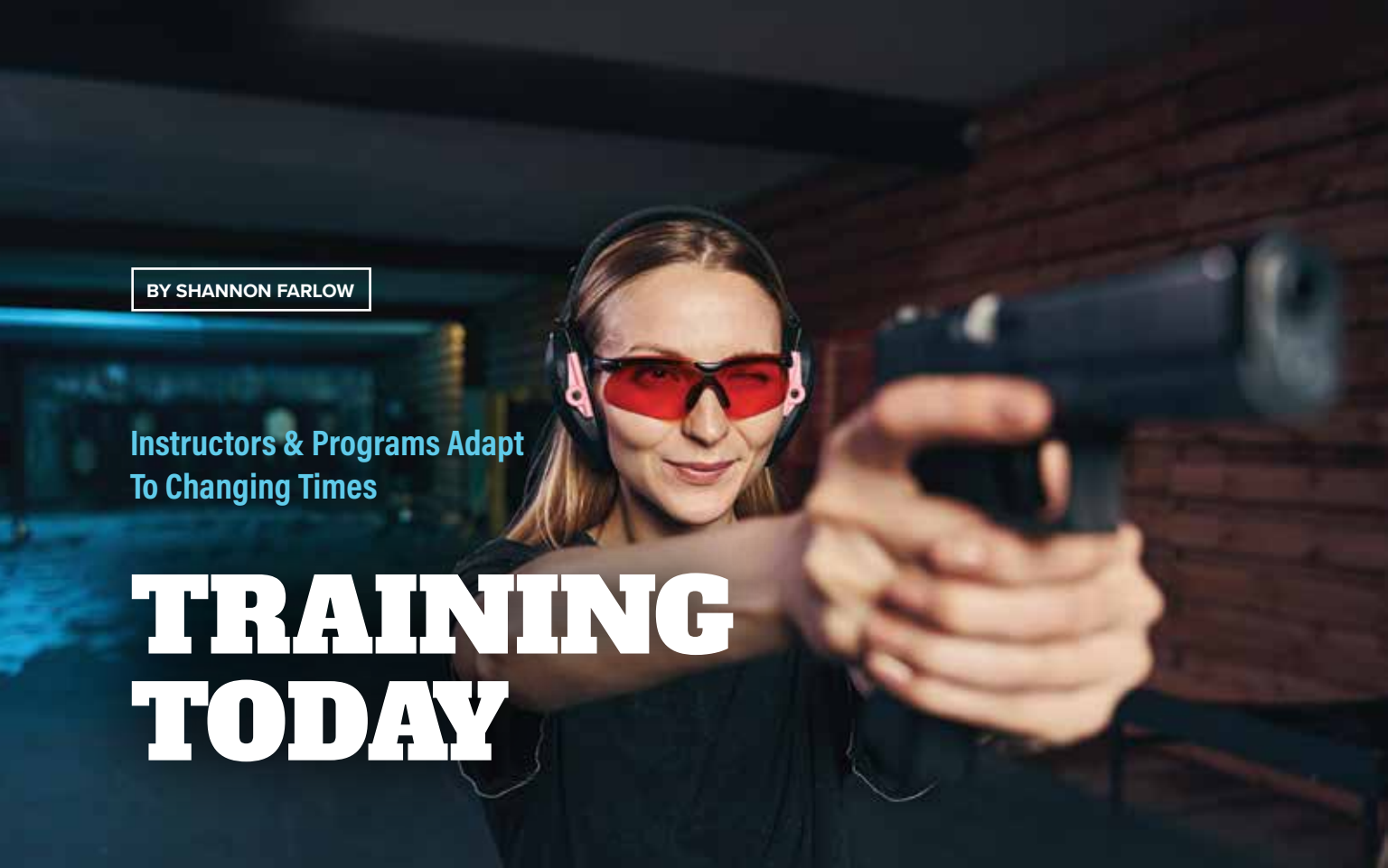
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BY SHANNON FARLOW

Instructors & Programs Adapt
To Changing Times

TRAINING TODAY

The past couple of years have been a wild ride for gun stores and shooting ranges. Historic firearms and ammunition sales, unprecedented shortages, a crippled supply chain, as well as mandates and lockdowns that required dealers and range operators to improvise and adapt on the fly.

During this period, more than 13.5 million people purchased a firearm for the first time, according to the NSSF. Many of those new gun owners lined up at ranges across the country to train. To this day, traffic at shooting ranges remains strong.

Exactly how did shooting ranges navigate the turbulence

of the past two years? How were instructors and range operators able to work around the ammo shortage? In what ways did training programs change in order to meet the needs of so many new gun owners while continuing to serve experienced shooters? What does the future of firearms training look like?

To answer these questions and more, *SI* spoke with Ava Flannell, owner of Elite Firearms & Training in Colorado Springs, Colo.; Tiffany Johnson, an NRA training counselor and instructor at Citizens Safety Academy in Murfreesboro, Tenn.; Lisa Roux, owner and CFO of Shooter's World; and Paige Roux, training coordinator and senior firearms instructor at Shooter's World in Arizona. (Editor's Note: The quotes attributed to Lisa and Paige Roux are presented together.)

“

A person's first impression when shooting a firearm often determines their long-term relationship with guns.

”

Paige Roux

SI: How long have you been offering firearms training?

Johnson: About 20 years.

Flanell: I've been an NRA Certified Instructor since 2013, and I've also owned Elite Firearms & Training since then, as well.

Roux: Shooter's World has been offering training in the Phoenix area since 1989.

SI: How have your training approaches and offerings evolved over the years?

Roux: We've evolved our class offerings to appeal to different demographics and customer needs. This includes classes specifically for women — the fastest-growing demographic in the gun industry over the past five years, youth classes and a new curriculum we developed called Defensive Mindset.

This non-shooting class focuses on situational awareness and the use of various self-defense tools for customers or situations where a firearm isn't the best option. Many concerned parents have taken this class with their teens to help them navigate living in a time with unprecedented distractions. We partner with parents to help reinforce critical skills for teens and adults, such as the importance of being aware of your surroundings and carrying yourself confidently.

Flanell: I've evolved as an instructor. I'm always a student taking opportunities to learn anything I can so

“
When you get a new class, you must start with a clean palette and assume they know nothing.
”

Ava Flanell

I can pass new knowledge on to my students. In my opinion, my classes continue to get better. What's changed the most is how long they are. Over the years, I've discovered better techniques to explain and demonstrate the class material. I would say I've become more efficient so students don't feel like the class is filled with fluff or repetitive information. It maintains their attention and interest.

Johnson: I used to be against ladies-only training. Now I see it as a legitimate approach to student-centered instruction, as long as the instructor doesn't water down the material and gives the same substantive content to

ladies-only classes as they do to coed classes.

SI: What's your secret to firearms training success?

Flanell: There's a lot of firearms instructors out there, but very few teachers. This sounds so cheesy, but when you get a new class, you must start with a clean palette and assume they know nothing. You have to put yourself in the student's position by starting with the fundamentals and building up to more advanced topics.

Additionally, you must be approachable. Firearms is an intimidating topic, and when you're in a class environment, you're even more likely to hold back from asking questions. Make the class fun, add some humor and get the students to open up to one another so it creates a more relaxed environment for learning. Students who enjoy their experience will let their

friends and family know. Word of mouth is the best form of advertisement.

Johnson: Patience, honesty and creativity. Remaining student-centered — always striving to see my students' points of view and remove my own ego from the equation.

Roux: A person's first impression when shooting a firearm often determines their long-term relationship with guns. We hire and train our instructors to provide a safe, non-intimidating, customer service-oriented experience. We recognize the need for instructors who are patient, understanding, approachable and who will leave the student empowered to continue to train and learn.

SI: Did the ammunition shortage over the past couple of years affect your training



Paige Roux, training coordinator and senior firearms instructor at Shooter's World, encourages dealers to create class packages — which will help generate return students.

efforts? How so?

Johnson: Not as much as other training schools. Since we focus on beginner shooters, our classes are shorter and have lower round counts. It worked to our benefit during the ammo shortage.

Roux: Yes, our training efforts were impacted by the increased cost in ammunition. During the ammo shortage, we reduced the required round count in many classes without impacting the level of training by using additional tools such as dry-fire practice. We've always emphasized the importance of quality of rounds over quantity.

Flanell: So many instructors think a good class means firing hundreds of rounds. From day one, I've always made sure each shot counts. A good instructor can teach a student how to properly shoot well with less than 50 rounds of ammunition. Maintaining those skills after class is, of course, something up to the student, to which I encourage dry-firing techniques and training aids.

SI: What did you do to overcome the ammo challenges?

Roux: As a company, we decided the continuity of ammo supply for our customers was the most critical factor during the shortage. We were forced to pay far above retail for much of the ammo we procured during that time, but doing so allowed

“
High-quality instruction and a student-centered approach raises the odds of repeat customers.
”

Tiffany Johnson

us to maintain a steady supply. We also continued to offer ammo discounts for students, gun-purchase customers and our members.

Flanell: In many classes, I utilized airguns, laser guns and dry-firing. In 2020, classes were booked out for months. Even if ammo wasn't available or in short supply, students still wanted to learn how to operate their guns and get a concealed carry permit, regardless of range time being an option. When something becomes unavailable you must find a close alternative.

Although I don't think anything on the market can replicate live-fire, I felt confident I equipped students with the knowledge of how to use their firearm.

For those students who had the opportunity to shoot, I made sure we used very little ammo. I substituted ammo with snap caps so students could work on their trigger pull and anticipation as well as learn how to clear a malfunction.

SI: How has the nationwide influx of first-time gun owners affected your training program?

Roux: We've offered additional class dates and times, added additional jobs to our local economy with the addition of more instructors. We also added RSOs due to the number of first-time shooters who were taking our classes. As a responsible firearms retailer with a heavy emphasis on safe firearms handling and ownership, we strongly encouraged those looking to purchase their first firearm to demo our range rentals prior to making a purchasing decision. Part

of our business model has always been to offer discounts for training classes and free range passes with every firearm purchase to encourage customers to become proficient with their gun.

Our overall inventory and purchasing strategy was also impacted by this influx. We heavily purchased guns that are popular for first-time gun owners and quickly became known for consistently having the inventory for these customers.

Flanell: I would say the influx has died down a bit. Classes were selling out left and right and now things have returned to a normal pace. One thing I noticed during this time was the types of people taking classes. I saw a huge influx of people who lean left politically or used to be anti-gun attending classes. Students seemed to be more



Tiffany Johnson, left, oversees live-fire training during an all-ladies class. Once in opposition to such classes, Johnson now sees their value as long as the instructor doesn't "water down the material and gives the same substantive content" in these classes as coed classes.



With ammo availability at a premium, Ava Flannell of Elite Firearms & Training adapted by using airguns and adding dry-fire segments to her classes.

emotionally pulled to take the class based on current events and it made for interesting discussions in class.

Johnson: We welcome it, since it's our focal point. It's increased the size of our target market and opened up lots of business-development opportunities both for in-person training and for online training.

SI: How are you continuing to appeal to your established customers and experienced shooters?

Roux: We continue to offer training for intermediate-level shooters in our class offerings. More advanced shooters continue to benefit from taking private, fully customizable lessons with our most experienced instructors. We also offer special events with local

manufacturers to provide unique opportunities to interact with new products.

Flannell: Now that things have calmed down a bit, I plan to add more advanced classes to the calendar. I have all these new gun owners who took the basic classes and are looking to advance their skills.

Johnson: High-quality instruction and a student-centered approach raises the odds of repeat customers.

SI: What does the future of firearms training look like? Are you expecting growth?

Roux: We'll continue to reach out and engage with new gun owners through targeted marketing efforts. We're expecting additional growth and many more new gun owners over the next 18–24 months.

In fact, our third indoor range is currently under construction in Goodyear, Ariz.

Unfortunately, the firearms industry is heavily impacted by current events, which oftentimes means unexpected changes in business. With the current instability both domestically and abroad, we anticipate this leading to additional demand for firearms and ammunition. Due to the volatility of the industry, we work every day to be prepared for these unknowns.

Flannell: Anyone who has been in the firearms industry for some time knows about the peaks and valleys. Unfortunately, we tend to see the peaks when unfortunate events happen that breed fear. Personally, I've seen a slight decline in business the past two months. This happens from time to time, which just means instructors must get creative and create classes or events to pique the interest of their current customers. I have invested in a virtual training simulator and it allows for incorporating movement and cover drills most ranges aren't equipped to allow safely. Adding advanced training in a 100% safe environment like this is a big opportunity to teach valuable skills many people won't be able to practice otherwise.

Johnson: We expect tremendous growth, and we're already seeing it happen. We look forward

to welcoming as many newcomers as possible. The more we dispel the outdated stereotypes of gun ownership, the faster our community will expand.

SI: Any advice you would offer to dealers or ranges looking to revamp or expand their training programs?

Johnson: Get out of the box. Don't focus on being "gun people." Instead, be regular folks who also just coincidentally happen to own and carry guns. It makes you more relatable to customers and students, especially those who are new to the firearms community.

Roux: Offer packages that encourage students to continue their firearms training journey with you. Create a warm, welcoming and safe environment where *everyone* feels a sense of belonging. Continue to network with industry trainers to expand or update your personal knowledge in order to make decisions about what to add to your curriculum. Keep your knowledge and skills up to date!

Flannell: Nothing lasts forever. Take advantage of the busy times and enjoy the small breaks in between to reflect and find new opportunities to expand your business. **SI**

Editor's Note: Additional excerpts from this story are available at shootingindustry.com.

BY TIM BARKER

High-End Appeal



GIVE CUSTOMERS ANOTHER REASON TO VISIT WITH UPSCALE INVENTORY

Eddy Rodriguez remembers the days when customers would walk through the front door of his former shop, Pistol Parlour, and make a beeline for a particular display case. It was the one filled with Staccatos, Nighthawk Custom 1911s and upper-tier CZs. “We had people who would

just shop out of that case. They’d ignore everything else. It told me there was a market for this,” said Rodriguez, now the general manager of a store dedicated to those high-end firearms.

It’s not entirely accurate to refer to the Pistol Parlour as his former shop, since his current Mesa, Ariz., store has the same owner. In fact, it’s right next door.

But during the early days of

the COVID outbreak, Rodriguez and the store’s owner started brainstorming ways to help the business set itself apart from others. The idea was born for The Vault at Pistol Parlour — a boutique shop for the best of what the firearms industry has to offer.

And it won’t take long for any fan of the *John Wick* movies to know where they got their inspiration for the décor and atmosphere. It’ll take even less time to realize The Vault isn’t the place to go for a run-of-the-mill GLOCK.

Guns sold here aren’t cheap. The least-expensive gun in the shop right now is a Colt King

◀ High-end pistols (like the Staccato P, foreground, or Staccato XL, background) may not be a customer's first purchase, but having them on hand will encourage customers to step into new platforms that come loaded with features. (Photo: Staccato)

Cobra at \$800 — and only because they're hard to find. You can't get a semi-auto for less than \$1,300.

For customers looking for Staccato, Nighthawk, Wilson Combat and Atlas Gunworks, this is the place to go. They carry rifles from Knight's Armament, Noveske and Geissele. And at the top end, there may be a \$16,000 Cosmi shotgun on display.

Rodriguez draws comparisons between the shop's offerings and the luxury cars and watches sought by some customers.

"There will always be a market for it," he said. "There are people who want the nicer stuff. Is it for everybody? No."

While it may not be for your shop, The Vault offers a glimpse of the existing demand for handguns and rifles selling for north of \$2,000. Every market is different, and what works for one set of customers may not work for another. But Rodriguez argues there are probably more customers interested in higher-end gear than many shop owners realize.

"A lot of people are just scared to take the leap and don't realize the market is out there," he suggested.

It's also a chance to develop a new line of customers — and relationships with those who aren't shy about investing in pricey guns.

"It's not like they're buying one Staccato P and you never see them again," he said. "You build a relationship with these folks."

MEETING DEMAND

That's certainly been the experience of Maryland Elite Firearms, just north of Baltimore, where Staccato has long been a popular brand with customers.

"They kind of have the market cornered if you want a double-stack, 1911-style gun. They're everywhere and it's what people are looking for," remarked Owner

Dan Hartman.

After half a dozen years of being the most-expensive guns in the shop, those Staccatos are about be dethroned. The shop recently signed on with Atlas Gunworks — whose guns top the \$5,000 mark — to be a stocking dealer.

Of course, it's not easy to make this sort of inventory decision. Starting from scratch with a custom shop can be a daunting task. Often,

**There are
probably more
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owners realize.**

there's a vetting process, minimum purchases and annual sales targets to meet.

With production lead times for some of these shops stretching out a year or two, it's even more difficult now to make those investments. "What will the market be like in a year? You just don't know," Hartman pondered.

Still, he sees a demand he hopes to meet.

"We have a customer base that own Staccatos already," he said. "They're looking to level up."

SALES MAGNET

Obviously, not every one of your customers is in the market for one of these pricier guns. But it doesn't mean they don't want to see them. And hold them.

Having one of the guns used by Keanu Reeves in the *John Wick* movies can give everyone a reason to step into the shop and browse. Think of them as sales magnets. Everyone carries GLOCKS and any number of polymer guns, but when you can offer something no one else has, it gives people another reason to visit your store.

"When people come in and see the higher-end firearms and accessories, they want to come back. It's almost like they take your



The upscale The Vault At Pistol Parlour provides a one-of-a-kind customer experience with the finest handguns, rifles, knives, optics and accessories on display. (Photo: Vida Pro Productions)



Dan Hartman, owner of Maryland Elite Firearms, has forged a reputation for maintaining a robust supply of high-end inventory. When customers come in for a visit, he acknowledges they may not purchase immediately, but just getting to hold a high-end firearm “plants the seed” for a future sale.

shop more seriously,” Hartman reasoned.

Just giving them the chance to fondle the gun can lead to a sale — even if it’s not until several months down the road.

“They may not buy one today, but they’ll remember you when they’re more financially ready,” Hartman said. “Just getting to hold one plants the seed.”

“YOU JUST DON’T KNOW.”

Another thing to keep in mind is you can never really know which of your customers — or potential customers — is the kind of person willing to pony up serious money for a firearm.

In Arizona, Rodriguez sees his share of well-dressed customers who look the part of a high-end buyer. But some of his best customers look like they just stepped off a construction site.

“There are some people who come in wearing a Rolex, but it could be the guy who walks in with muddy boots and Dickies,” he said.

Hartman agrees: “You just don’t know. You can’t tell by what the guy is wearing. It really can be anybody.”

Another thing to factor in is the

evolution of your customers. They may start out with a Springfield Armory Hellcat. Over time, however, their tastes and tolerance for spending can change substantially.

“You’ll have customers come in with three or four polymer guns,” Hartman explained. “They’ve been watching Staccatos online for a few months and now they want to trade in their GLOCKS.”



CZ-USA TS 2 Racing Green

It’s an evolution that could also come into play with all those newbies — or at least some of them — who joined the ranks of gun owners during the past couple of years. The key is convincing them to get those guns out to the range, for practice, training or competition.

“We need them to realize shooting is a lot of fun,” said Rodriguez.

Often, they simply need more exposure to firearms. They might enjoy a GLOCK 34, but over time they’ll start to see the advantages offered by a CZ Shadow or Wilson Combat EDC 9.

“The majority of the guns we sell are to people who have climbed that ladder,” he confirmed. “It’s very seldom someone starts at the top right out of the gate.”

Indeed, a favorite customer who scoffs at anything that costs more than a GLOCK 19 can begin to see things differently.

Said Rodriguez: “I have a customer who used to come in and laugh at the prices. Now he buys.”

GETTING IN

You may also be surprised at the broad appeal these higher-end firearms have. Consider what’s coming out of the shop at Texas-based Staccato. Formerly STI, in recent years the company has embarked upon a substantial makeover — shifting from a competition emphasis to one considerably broader.

The company now has lines appealing to competition shooters as well as law enforcement (Staccatos are approved for use by some 400 agencies across the country) and concealed carry advocates.

“We have a lot of different options in the 2011 platform,” said Kristin Marlow, the company’s chief marketing officer.

The company’s guns are also generating interest from some of the industry’s newest customers. A Staccato may not be the first gun someone buys, but it’s an attractive upgrade down the line for someone who sees the appeal of a nicer trigger and more manageable recoil.

Still, the company is in no rush to see its guns on the shelves of every store in the nation. Becoming a stocking dealer for Staccato is more complicated than just placing an order. There are interviews, site visits and an examination of your customer base. When a relationship is formed, it’s followed by sales training and multiple follow-up visits and analysis.

“It’s a pretty lengthy process to be a

retail partner,” said Tony Pignato, who manages those relationships as the gunmaker’s chief experience officer.

When looking for dealers to work with, the company puts a lot of emphasis on customer experiences

“When people come in and see the higher-end firearms and accessories, they want to come back. It’s almost like they take your shop more seriously.”

DAN HARTMAN

OWNER OF MARYLAND ELITE FIREARMS

and whether the shop can be seen as an extension of Staccato’s own image. It could just as easily be a small shop in a small town as it is a large retail operation in a major metro area.

One of the goals, Pignato said, is for the fit to be right — both for Staccato and the dealer.

“They’re not going to be sitting on \$100,000 of Staccatos and realize it didn’t work,” Pignato said. “We won’t let it get to that.”

Another manufacturer serving the high-end segment of the market, Nighthawk Custom produces feature-rich 1911s and is the exclusive importer of Korth German-made revolvers and Cosmi Italian-made luxury semi-auto shotguns.

Because of its dealer-direct distribution model, Nighthawk Custom Director of Marketing Landon Stone says the company is squarely focused on the success of its dealers. Nighthawk hosts Dealer Summits, a two-day intensive training and education course at

Nighthawk’s Berryville, Ark., campus, disseminates an e-newsletter that supports and directs business to its dealers and offers a robust demo gun program, pistol financing, point-of-sale materials and more. Dealer field visits (promoting Nighthawk Custom Days/Weekends) provide another opportunity for Nighthawk account managers to interact with dealers and end users.

Stone shared some tips on determining a customer’s interest level in high-end firearms.

“We put an emphasis on getting to know the customer and focus on having a relationship with them, instead of assuming and profiling them,” he said. “We know most people like nice things and we help them understand the value of an heirloom piece. You can figure out that higher-end customer pretty quickly with the right questions and listening to them.”

The best way to find out whether high-end inventory will bring customers in? Ask them. **BI**

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**DON'T
SWEAT IT.**

Getting Customers In-Store During Summer

BY CAROLEE ANITA BOYLES

The beginning of summer often marks a slowdown in firearms sales depending, of course, on a store's inventory mix and the demographics of its customer base. Savvy retailers find ways to maximize both traffic and sales through a variety of store management strategies and promotions during this time.

KNOW YOUR MARKET

Anthony Puglia owns Puglia's Sporting Goods in Metairie, La. Due to his store's proximity to New Orleans, it

makes for strong self-defense sales.

"New Orleans has a lot of crime right now," he said. "A lot of residents are coming in and buying everything from Mace to TASERS to handguns. It's still mostly new clientele who have never owned a firearm before."

During the summer, Puglia transforms his downstairs into a fishing store.

At the same time, certain categories on the shooting side start selling well. One of those categories is pocketknives. Customers purchase them for gifts for weddings, graduations and Father's Day.

"We restock all the knives we carry throughout the year,"

Puglia noted. "I carry even more knives in the summer than I do in the fall."

One of the ways Puglia promotes knives in the summer is through Facebook. Although he doesn't use Facebook personally, he finds it a very effective advertising tool for his establishment.

"It's instant gratification," he said. "We post things every day just to keep our customers interested. We capture a market outside of our own territory by hiring influencers to share our pages. We have people who are involved in our industry and who are well known, who use their platforms to advertise for us."

Doing this has given the store national reach, according to Puglia. Within hours of posting something about a product, his store may be shipping it anywhere in the country.

Another summertime category is thermal and night vision scopes for hog hunters.

"We stock up on this category for the summer," Puglia said. "Once deer and turkey seasons are over, it's about the only thing left for hunters to do."

SALES EVENTS BRING PEOPLE IN

Bill Roney has owned The Outdoorsman of Santa Fe in Santa Fe, N.M. for 47 years. His father was the director of sales for Remington, and Roney himself was the assistant to the director of international sales at Remington.

During the summer, Roney shared target shooting takes on more importance in his business than it does at other times of the year.

"People are out shooting targets, and they're shooting in matches," he observed. "Because of this, .22s are going to be popular for families with kids, and shotguns are more popular than at other times. A lot of competitors are shooting modern sporting rifles."

To prepare for the summer selling season, Roney adjusts his inventory to meet anticipated need. Especially in today's retail environment, this means planning far ahead and placing orders so he gets what he needs in time for the season.

Because his sales are mostly brick-and-mortar rather than online, Roney holds in-store events to get customers through the door.

"We do a lot of in-store promotions," he said. "We also post specials on our website."

Another big category for Roney, especially in the summer, is vintage and antique firearms.

"Santa Fe is a destination town," he noted. "When people come here on vacation, it's one of the things they come in and ask — whether we have firearms with a story."

Obviously, maintaining an inventory of vintage and antique firearms isn't as easy as ordering from a distributor.

"We're always interested in trying to obtain these kinds of firearms," Roney said. "Whether it's estate sales or other possibilities, we're always looking."

USE CLASSES TO COMPETE WITH MOTHER NATURE

Paul Bastean is managing director at Ultimate Defense in St. Peters, Mo.

"We have a lot of people who are going boating, taking vacations, doing lawn work, gardening ... there are a lot of outdoor activities they can be doing other than shooting on an indoor range. So, we compete with Mother Nature in the summer."

Paul Bastean, Managing Director
Ultimate Defense
St. Peters, Mo.

Bastean said the categories that sell well during the summer aren't different from the ones selling well all year. According to Bastean, the culture of the store is very much centered around their mission statement, which is: *"The knowledge, tools and experience to protect yourself and the people you care about."*

"As a result, we don't do a lot of hunting stuff," Bastean confirmed. "We don't do a lot of sports shooting stuff. What we do is primarily about self-defense, so our business is a little different from stores that try to cover as many different genres as possible. We pretty much specialize in this one area."

As a result, the store sells handguns, home-defense shotguns and other similar products all year long. The volume of their sales, however, changes a good bit during the summer.

"At this point, we're competing with soccer games, baseball tournaments and the lake," he said. "On the weekends, a lot of people will decide to go to Lake of the Ozarks. We also have the Missouri River and the Mississippi River, so we have a lot of people who are going boating, taking vacations, doing lawn work, gardening ... there are a lot of outdoor activities they can be doing other than shooting on an indoor range."



With events like weddings and Father's Day on the summer calendar, Anthony Puglia maintains a robust supply of pocketknives and markets them as add-on gifts. Silver Stag, ZT, Gerber and Kershaw are among his best-selling brands.

So, we compete with Mother Nature in the summer, whereas in the winter people get in their cars and drive to the range. It's the kind of competition we have in the summer."

Therefore, Bastean focuses on bringing in more of his normal business during the summer months — which means giving customers a reason to come into the store.

To prepare for the summer selling season, Roney adjusts his inventory to meet anticipated need. Especially in today's retail environment, this means planning far ahead and placing orders so he gets what he needs in time for the season.

"When people get up in the morning and head for work, they grab some coffee or if they're hungry they get breakfast," Bastean noted. "Most people don't get up in the morning and just decide, 'I'm in the mood to buy a gun today.'"

Buying a gun is not a spontaneous purchase, he added; it's something the purchaser plans and

researches before he or she buys it.

"There's a lot of forethought that goes into buying a gun," Bastean said. "Even once they decide what they want, they're still hesitant to make the purchase."

A profitable revenue stream of Ultimate Defense is its curated classes — which help boost summertime sales.

"Here in the St. Louis area, we lead the nation in carjackings," Bastean informed. "When you look at our Facebook page and our Instagram page, you'll see something on how to survive a carjacking. When people see it, they realize they need the course. We emphasize this is the reason you need training, and during the summer we play it up harder than we do the rest of the year."

When it comes to summertime inventory management, what Bastean does now is different from what he was able to do three years ago.

"In the real world, before COVID and before Ukraine, we were able to do some inventory management," he said, "but for the last two years, it's been all about 'get what you can, when you can.' Selling product is not the problem; acquiring product is the problem."

Inventory management today is almost impossible, Bastean added.

"You don't have a lot of options," he said. "It's not a matter of what you want in your store. When you order something today, it may be six months to a year before you can get it. It really is get what you can when you can." **SI**



Capitalizing on what's trending in its urban market, Ultimate Defense promotes a "How To Survive A Carjacking" class to great effect during the summer months.



"Most people don't get up in the morning and just decide, 'I'm in the mood to buy a gun today,'" observed Paul Bastean of Ultimate Defense. As such, he recognizes a lot of thought goes into a customer's decision to visit his store for a firearms purchase.

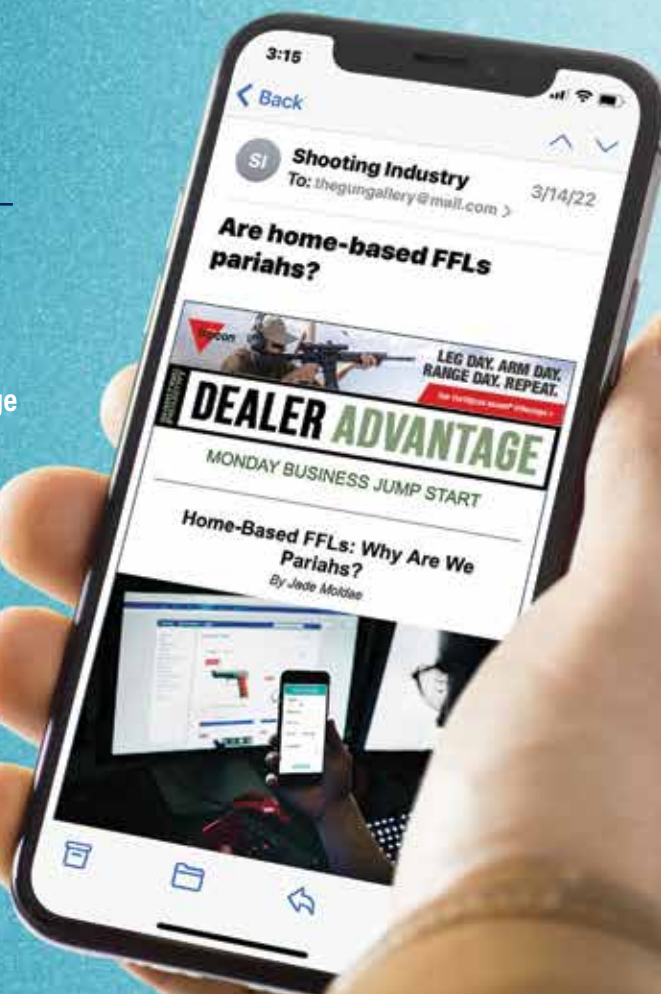
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History always has stories to tell. In FMG Publications' latest Special Edition issue of **GUNS MAGAZINE SURPLUS & MILITARY CLASSIC FIREARMS**, articles highlight the impact of machine guns adapted for use in the skies, investigate the nature of "mobile warfare" by destroying tanks without serious casualties and explore weapons such as the Browning Auto-5, HK91, ZB26, Franchi SPAS-12. Handguns and edged weapons played roles in world history, too. The mechanics of the Czech vz.52 and even the part played by the machete in modern combat get a closer look in the 132-page issue.



MAVERICK BLINDS

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maverickblinds.com

The **MAVERICK XL** from Maverick Blinds has nine side-opening windows on friction hinges that allow for 360-degree viewing and shooting with a gun, bow or crossbow. The two-piece design makes it easy to set up, and a 2" rain guard guarantees water stays out. A 2" bottom flange helps secure the blind to the ground or a platform. A slide-lock door seal and window seals come standard, and an overhang above the windows provides an added layer of protection. The rotomolded polyethylene construction is extremely durable, UV-stabilized and paintable. The Maverick XL is available in black, brown and green with clear or tinted Plexiglass windows.



CZ-USA

(800) 955-4486
cz-usa.com

CZ-USA introduces the updated and upgraded **CZ SCORPION 3+** pistol. Features include an ambidextrous bolt catch, ambidextrous mag release, upgraded grip design, enhanced sights, redesigned polymer handguard, improved upper and lower receiver and new magazines, backward compatible with Scorpion EVO 3 models. Specifications of the 9mm Luger **CZ SCORPION 3+ MICRO PISTOL** version include: 20-round magazine capacity; double-stack polymer magazine; fiber-reinforced polymer frame and slide; adjustable aluminum sights; polymer grips adjustable for reach to the trigger; ambidextrous thumb safety; and 4.2" cold hammer-forged, threaded 1/2x28 barrel.

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F.A.B. Defense's **GLOCK 17** and **GLOCK 19 ULTIMAG MAGAZINES** deliver an additional round of capacity with a total round count of 18 for the GLOCK 17 and 16 rounds for the GLOCK 19. The Ultimags also come with two baseplates, giving users the option of a standard or a tactical base. The tactical base facilitates easier extraction from a mag pouch with gloves or enhanced stripping when clearing a malfunction. A blue follower allows easy empty-status confirmation and a rough texture in key areas to ensure a secure grip. GLOCK 17 Ultimags are available in 10- or 18-round options; GLOCK 19 Ultimags are offered in 10- or 16-round versions.



EMERSON KNIVES

(310) 539-5633
emersonknives.com

The **JUNE BUG** from Emerson Knives has a 2.3" blade and a 3.2" handle, making it ideal for everyday carry. It fits snugly down in the pocket or can be carried a variety of ways with the Emerson clip. Its Wharnccliffe-style blade boasts a straight, razor-sharp edge. The June Bug's OAL is 5.5", and it weighs 2.5 oz.





DSG OUTERWEAR

(608) 665-0303
dsgouterwear.com

Constructed of quiet, bonded stretch fabric with a soft shearing interior, the **BREANNA 2.0** from DSG Outerwear moves along with a hunter as they track prey. The exterior is DWR treated to be waterproof and water repellent. Versatile features include a removable and adjustable hood; a durable quarter-zip as well as adjustable cuffs. A two-way kangaroo pocket with hook-and-loop closure along with a vertical lapel zippered pocket provides easy access storage of lightweight gear. The pullover is offered in the Realtree Edge camouflage pattern in women's sizes XS-SXL.



REMORA HOLSTERS

(239) 316-7770
remoraholsters.com

Remora Holsters' **OWB MAGAZINE HOLSTER** features a full-side Velcro flap that allows the user to adjust for perfect cant and comfort. All magazine holders are made of the same original "Non-Slip" material used for IWB carry. The holder can accommodate a single-stack strip, small flashlight or knife. Interior lining options in a variety of colors are available for an additional fee.



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O.F. MOSSBERG & SONS INC.

(203) 230-5300
mossberg.com

The 12 GA **940 PRO TACTICAL** shotgun from Mossberg delivers ease of operation, reliability, adjustability and performance-driven features including an optic-ready receiver, oversized controls, M-LOK compatibility, stock adjustability and an 18.5" barrel with interchangeable choke system. The 940 Pro Tactical has corrosion-resistant internal parts and finishes including a nickel boron-coated gas piston, magazine tube, hammer and sear. The durable gas system is compatible with factory-manufactured 2.75" and 3" shotshells, and provides for faster, more reliable cycling and can run up to 1,500 rounds between cleaning intervals. OAL is 37.5", and it weighs 7.5 lbs.



BEYOND CLOTHING

(206) 767-0307
beyondclothing.com

The **CELERIS MIDWEIGHT L2 PULLOVER** from Beyond Clothing boasts double-knit Verso Weave fleece that creates air channels to funnel moisture to the smooth exterior and quickly evaporate to leave users warm but dry. Lighter fabric at the sides and underarms delivers targeted breathability and the 3/4-zip front allows swift venting of excess heat. Articulated elbows ensure full range of motion and integrated floating monkey paws slip under gloves for seamless coverage. The right-wrist zip pocket securely stows personal items. Color choices include Rustic Green, Coyote, Manatee Gray, navy and black. It's available in men's sizes S-XL in regular- or long-length versions.

TULSTER

tulster.com

The **CONTOUR** OWB holster from Tulster provides ultra-concealability thanks to the "molded-in" asymmetrical wings of its Kydex shell that angle the firearm's grip toward the body, eliminating visible print. With the Retention Adjustment Slot, the retention tag can be vertically adjusted and fully tightened for quick retention adjustment and a rock-solid fit. The optic-ready holster has a raised sight channel to allow for aftermarket sights, and an open-ended muzzle for threaded barrels to pass through. The Contour is available for many popular handguns including the GLOCK 43X MOS, SIG P365 and P365XL, Springfield Hellcat and Shield Plus, as well as a variety of larger firearms for OWB carry. It's available in black, black carbon fiber and black multicam.



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TAURUS

(800) 327-3776
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The Taurus **G3XL** carries over the G3's full-size slide and barrel assembly. The all-steel slide features a durable Tenifer black-matte finish to resist the wear and corrosion of EDC and houses a 4" precision-machined stainless steel barrel. The G3XL distinguishes itself with a compact grip that easily conceals when holstered IWB or while carrying OWB under casual clothing. To ensure smooth draw and re-holstering, the polymer receiver was streamlined, the accessory rail length was reduced and manual safety lever was eliminated. It ships with two 12-round magazines, and accepts 15- and 17-round magazines.

TANGODOWN INC.

(909) 392-4757
tangodown.com

TangoDown released the **BGV-KM2**, a redesigned KEYMOD vertical grip. The grip offers the same comfortable feel as before, but with a reduced footprint at the top to allow a higher grip closer to the handguard. The BGV-KM2 has the same durable mounting hardware as the original KEYMOD grip, boasts a compact length and tough, lightweight injection-molded shape and cast stainless steel KEYMOD anchor and Allen head fastener. The BGV-KM2 is offered in black (pictured) or Flat Dark Earth.



community I've been a part of for so long," he said. "But I also suffer with disadvantages — locked out from distribution, limited accessibility and cost of shipping."

Sam Summey, owner of B&S Gunsmithing in Flat Rock, N.C., noted five brick-and-mortar stores recently closed in his area — which, oddly enough, has actually *negatively* impacted his business.

"I truly miss these businesses because my 'rogue business' offers full-service gunsmithing, which the other (and most) gun stores in my area did not. My role was supportive to their businesses," he said.

Summey makes a concerted effort to be involved in his community.

"My small businesses has the time to work with local gun clubs that have junior marksmanship programs, NRA Foundation and other charitable organizations like 4-H. I'm sure there are many brick-and-mortar businesses that do the same to support the shooting industry."

THE GRASS ISN'T ALWAYS GREENER

Much to the chagrin of nearly every brick-and-mortar dealer, home-based FFLs — in general — have taken business from storefronts with the promise of a lower FFL transfer fee. As the saying goes, however, the grass isn't always greener on the other side. Some of the home-based dealers have lamented they lose business to storefront FFLs.

"Being 'locked out' of some of the major distributors and manufacturers puts us at a serious disadvantage to the brick-and-mortar stores. We can't compete with pricing or volume like the stores that can order from the larger distributors, so we lose business to them," said Steve Golla, co-owner of Twin Oaks Custom Gunsmithing in Tidioute, Pa.

Lynn Gabehart has run a home-based operation for 30 years, LG Sports Systems & Firearms Training in Montrose, Colo., but is looking to close down later this year in light of the storefront requirement to do business with most wholesalers and manufacturers.

"It's been a long road; I never got rich but enjoyed the work. This year, I'm calling it quits because of the supply chain and the *big business rules* that are killing the little guy. If someone is thinking about getting an FFL forget it — it's not worth the crap you have to go through," he said.

Greg Downs, president of home-based Family Firearms Safety in Overland Park, Kan., has been in business for 10 years and offered each way of doing business — storefront vs. online — has intrinsic benefits. It's up to the operator to take advantage of them.

"The reality of our industry is a large portion of all sales is initiated online. This means unless the retail store has cultivated a significant (and easily found) online presence and an aggressive pricing strategy, the customer won't even know about the brick-and-mortar store until the checkout process when they need a transfer FFL. At that point, the home-based FFL has an advantage because we're willing and able to provide better customer service and price."

"THOSE STORE OWNERS WHO FIGURE OUT WHAT THEIR ADVANTAGES ARE — IN THE CUSTOMER'S EYES — AND FIGURE OUT A WAY TO EXPLOIT THOSE ADVANTAGES CAN BE VERY SUCCESSFUL."

Greg Downs, President
Family Firearms Safety, Overland Park, Kan.

Downs continued: "Brick-and-mortar stores do have some advantages, though. Those store owners who figure out what their advantages are — in the customer's eyes — and figure out a way to exploit those advantages can be very successful."

THE STOREFRONT'S PERSPECTIVE

Storefront dealers have weighed in here, as well.

"I've read your articles, and can see the home-based stores' point. They want to have the cake and eat it, too," said Bill McGuire, owner of Interlaken Guns in Interlaken, N.Y. "You need to see the point of the brick-and-mortar stores: We have a lot of overhead expenses to operate a store. It's unfair to stock inventory that customers can handle, and then run down to a home-based FFL to buy at a discounted price because they have no inventory and less expenses. We wouldn't have the industry we have without the

brick-and-mortar stores."

Richard Shearer, owner of RWS Arms in Apollo, Pa., started out as a "kitchen table dealer" more than 40 years ago, but one exchange after he opened his store prompted a decision on who he bought from.

"I can still remember having individuals examine inventory, ask questions about the product and not make a purchase. A defining experience for me was when one such individual — after examining a handgun and getting his questions answered — commented to me my price was reasonable but he had a friend that had an FFL and would order it for him. That was the day I stopped any purchasing from wholesalers who did not require a brick-and-mortar store."

However, as business practices have changed due to the existence of the internet, Shearer is taking a thorough look at whether he'll continue as a storefront operation today.

"I expect that shortly I will close my small store, stop carrying inventory and switch to setting up a website and doing transfers if I choose to even continue to remain in business. Last year, I looked at putting a major and high-priced line of optics in inventory. I met with the rep for the line in my store. After obtaining my wholesale pricing and then cross checking prices, I found major online optics sellers making sales to the public for less than my wholesale costs. So, the gain? A lower price. The loss? Hands on examination of a very costly product. My conclusion? Probably close the retail store and join the new way of doing business," he said.

PARTING THOUGHTS

As noted above, the sheer breadth and depth of responses that have poured in over the past couple months shows this is a hot-topic issue. I want to reiterate *Shooting Industry's* commitment to the storefront dealer. That said, we endeavor to equip dealers — regardless of their business model — in their efforts to grow the industry. It's a win-win if we can, collectively, welcome and activate lifelong sportsmen and women.

Have a comment to share? Send me a note directly: editor@shootingindustry.com. I welcome and appreciate feedback from readers — it helps us tailor content accordingly. **SI**



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BY JADE MOLDAE

“PARIAH” LETTER STRIKES A NERVE

It all started with an email — in the Jan. 2022 *Letters To The Editor* column, we ran a note from home-based FFL Matthew Sims, owner of Red Roo Defense, who questioned the policy of some wholesalers that require a storefront operation to open an account.

In his letter, Sims inquired, “Someone should do a story on why the home-based dealer is treated like a pariah. Does our money not spend as well, or is it just because the wholesalers are afraid we’re going to make too much money by not having enough overhead? Or is it simply collusion — the brick-and-mortar dealers just don’t want the competition and they have managed to convince the distributors we’re not worthy of their business?”

In my response to Sims, I affirmed *Shooting Industry’s* target audience will

continue to be the storefront dealer first — but we at *SI* recognize business has evolved, especially over the past two years. This exchange has generated an avalanche of reader mail, furthered by coverage in *SI’s* weekly jumpstart email program, Dealer Advantage.

Frankly, this topic has produced the highest levels of engagement I’ve seen in seven years as *Shooting Industry* editor. I’ve received everything from one-line emails to several totaling more than 1,000 words each — clearly, there are a lot of folks very passionate about this issue.

Though the storefront dealer/home-based FFL divide will likely be an enduring one, there are benefits to both models of doing business. And, competition certainly encourages businesses to hone their edge. Here’s a small sample size of the emails I’ve received on this subject.

SAME OBJECTIVE, DIFFERENT MEANS

There will always be some home-based FFLs that exist to transfer firearms for family and friends, but the majority I’ve heard from have similar ambitions to their brick-and-mortar counterparts: to serve their communities.

Robert Hood, owner of Robert’s Gunsmithing in Redmond, Ore., does mostly gunsmithing and transfers for customers and doesn’t have plans to open a physical storefront with high costs associated with rent and insurance. He is, however, actively involved in his area — which drives business.

“I EXPECT THAT SHORTLY I WILL CLOSE MY SMALL STORE, STOP CARRYING INVENTORY AND SWITCH TO SETTING UP A WEBSITE AND DOING TRANSFERS IF I CHOOSE TO EVEN CONTINUE TO REMAIN IN BUSINESS.”

Richard Shearer, Owner
RWS Arms, Apollo, Pa.

“Most of my customers are gunsmith related. I don’t advertise, but I do volunteer at our local range, which does funnel business my way,” he said.

In 2020, Rodney Ashmore turned a lifetime hobby into a business, opening home-based Kodiak Firearms in Avon, Ind. Ashmore is deaf and has developed close ties with deaf customers in his community.

“Kodiak Firearms is my opportunity to create a business that serves more than just as a personal brand and to build a name for myself, but will also establish a legacy through serving the passionate

Continued on p. 48

A WORD ON THE FLY-IN

In this month’s *Industry News* section, we covered the return of the NSSF’s Congressional Fly-In to Capitol Hill — giving industry executives the opportunity to meet with a significant amount of Congressional members and their staffs in person for the first time since 2019.

This was my fifth time attending NSSF’s Fly-In in person (last year’s was done virtually) and it’s quite eye-opening to see, firsthand, the various ways our industry

continues to be targeted by financial institutions and Big Tech. (A case in point: When one Fly-In attendee asked the room of 50 industry professionals if they, too, had experienced financial discrimination based on being a part of the firearms industry, all hands were raised.)

Having the opportunity for face-to-face meetings with members of Congress is invaluable — as they personify the challenges thousands of industry businesses face each day. Whether your business is a small operation with a



handful of employees or a multinational enterprise, I highly recommend attending events like this if you ever have the opportunity. The next NSSF Congressional Fly-In is scheduled for April 18–19, 2023.

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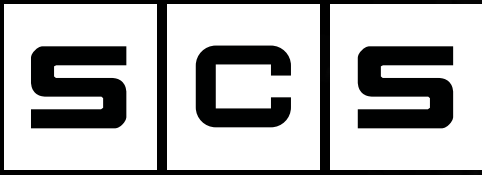
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BREAKING BARRIERS



Holosun's new SCS-MOS is a direct attachment optic for full-size Glock MOS™ systems offering the lowest profile deck height for use with standard height iron sights. The SCS-MOS combines solar power, rechargeable internal power storage, and an auto adjusting reticle brightness system to potentially operate indefinitely in multiple lighting conditions.