

Industry News

Bill's Gun Shop (MN) & Range Awarded NSSF Five-Star Rating 5 Times

The National Shooting Sports Foundation (NSSF) is pleased to announce that Bill's Gun Shop & Range has achieved Five Star-Ratings at all five locations.

Originally a single range built into Minnesota's Robbinsdale Town Center in 1998, Bill's Gun Shop & Range was purchased by current owner John Monson in 2003. That purchase was followed by a second range acquisition in nearby Circle Pines, in 2005. Monson added a third location across the state line in Hudson, Wisconsin, in 2012, and a fourth in Fargo, North Dakota, in 2015. A fifth retail-only store was developed in Moorhead, Minnesota, in January 2016, quickly followed by another range facility in Minnesota's Brainerd Lake area.

Each range follows the master "blueprint" Monson devised, with an emphasis on firearms education, safety and expansion of the shooting sports. That emphasis is accomplished

through range and store facilities that are open seven days a week, a large team of certified instructors teaching everything from the basics to concealed carry and tactical skills classes, a friendly, cheerful environment that encourages family and group participation, various membership options, fully stocked retail stores, and a comprehensive rental gun program that includes full-auto rentals at some locations. Onsite gunsmiths are available at three locations, with drop-off/pick-up services offered at a fourth.

The ranges work diligently at keeping their customers coming back regularly with a calendar chock full of special events such as youth days, ladies' nights and seniors' days. Monson also developed an all-day pass that lets a shooter pay one fee and come back as often as that person likes during that day, commenting, "Our motto is that we will always have lanes open to the public. They're available on a first-come, first-served basis

seven days a week, but many of our customers really appreciate the all-day range pass. They pay once, shoot, leave and come back, and with that pass they can stay as long as they'd like, shooting at their leisure with no time restraints. It's been a great tool for getting those infrequent shooters practicing more."

Each store, though modeled on the master blueprint of functionality, has a unique footprint:

- Robbinsdale is 22,000 square feet overall, including 4,200 square feet of retail space. The range facility consists of 22 25-yard lanes divided across two bays.

- North (Circle Pines) is 23,000 square feet overall, including 2,500 square feet of retail space. Twenty-four, 50-yard lanes across four separate bays define the range.

- Hudson has a footprint of 18,000 square feet overall with 3,500 square feet of retail space. The range boasts 24 25-yard lanes across two bays at 25 yards, plus a private three-lane bay that extends the shooting distance to 35 yards.

- Fargo has 4,500 square feet of retail space in its overall square footage of 22,000. Three bays contain a total of 26 35-yard lanes.

- Brainerd's facility is 23,000 square feet overall, including the chain's largest retail presence at 5,188 square feet. This location also has the longest range in its 10-lane bay that permits shooting to 50 yards. A second 25-yard bay boasts seven additional lanes.

"We designed the new Star-Rating Range Program in a way that will help advance and improve the overall business practices within the for shooting range and retail community," explained Zach Snow, NSSF Director, Shooting Range Services. "It's our expectation that ranges who are applying for a Five Star-Rating to be the best of the best while also identifying. But when we have one business that has five distinct and unique ranges scattered across three states — and all five earn our Five Star-Rating — then you have a true model of range ownership and operation success."

NSSF's highly respected Star-Rating Range Program works to encourage ranges of all sizes and locations to excel. Applying for a rating requires answering a comprehensive questionnaire and business owner self-evaluation of the facilities, staff, community outreach and other criteria. Ranges that appear to meet the criteria for a Four- or Five-star rating receive an on-site evaluation by NSSF staff. NSSF member ranges that meet a Three-star rating are recognized for being a part of the Star-Rating range family and are provided guidance to improve their facilities and achieve the higher two ratings. For more information, including instructions on how to apply for NSSF's Star-Rating Range Program, visit www.nssf.org/ranges or contact Zach Snow at zsnow@nssf.org.

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