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## Sisters women take up shooting

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Mary Fry, center, is one of several Sisters women who have taken up shooting in the past year or so. They are part of a nationwide trend that has seen an unprecedented number of women becoming involved in shooting for recreation and/or self-protection. *photo provided*

By Jim Cornelius, News Editor  
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Firearms sales hit record levels in 2020, with approximately 20 million firearms sold, and the pace has not slackened in 2021, with agencies reporting record numbers of background checks for sales being made in the first months of the year.

According to a New York Times report, “New preliminary data from Northeastern University and the Harvard Injury Control Research Center show that about a fifth of all Americans who bought guns last year were first-time gun owners. And the data, which has not been previously released, showed that new owners were less likely than usual to be male and white. Half were women, a fifth were Black, and a fifth were Hispanic.”

A National Shooting Sports Foundation survey indicates that the number of first-time gun purchasers in the first quarter of 2021 is over 40 percent of total purchasers, with 40 percent of those buyers being women.

The large increase in women taking up firearms comes as no surprise to Maureen Rogers, who runs a local firearms training program called Lady Gets A Gun. She has seen a tremendous increase in interest in her female-centric program in the past year, with an increase in enrollment of “maybe 50 or 60 percent — maybe more.”

She told The Nugget that women’s interest comes from a variety of impetuses.

“It’s so varied,” she said.

Some have long been afraid of guns and have decided they want to overcome that fear; some are looking for a new recreational activity, one that they can share with their partner; some are interested in self-defense. And, of course, there is often a combination of motives.

“Of late, since last summer, it’s been more for self-defense purposes,” Rogers observed.

Rogers’ program is based on an intensive, hands-on familiarization process, where women can handle a variety of different types of unloaded firearms in a classroom setting while learning their nomenclature and how they operate. Eventually, they get out to the range at the Redmond Rod & Gun Club for live shooting.

“It becomes more comfortable in a progressive way,” Rogers explained.

Rogers takes great satisfaction from breaking down inhibitions and helping women to feel comfortable and empowered through developing a capability with firearms. She recounted the story of one local woman who joined a class deliberately to challenge her own discomfort with firearms. Just seeing someone going armed on the ranch lands east of Sisters caused acute unease.

“She said the sight of it [was] really, really uncomfortable for her,” Rogers said.

After thorough familiarization in a supportive environment, her feelings changed.

“She just lit up,” Rogers recalled. “She said she felt so empowered by the end of the day because she had overcome this fear.”

The woman has since shot in a variety of disciplines and is planning to return to train further in July, Rogers said.

That experience tracks with that of Sisters resident Mary Fry.

“I had an innate fear of guns,” she told The Nugget. “I didn’t want to be in the same room with them.”

She knows of no particular reason for feeling this way — she had never had a bad experience. She decided that she wanted to overcome her innate fear.





“Firearms seem to be a way of life here, and a sport,” she said. “Many of our friends have them for hunting and target shooting... I decided it would be a good idea to get familiar with them.”

She joined a group of friends — including men — who signed up for training with Rogers (who offers co-ed training).

“I got to shoot eight different guns,” Fry said. “Which was wonderful. It was absolutely an amazing experience. I’m an enthusiast now.”

She said the turning point for her came in the live-fire portion of the program.

“I think it was at the shooting range and (Rogers) having so much delight that us girls were having so much fun,” she said. “It wasn’t what I was expecting...”

Fry said her primary interest is recreational. She may do some competition.

“It’ll just be target shooting,” she said. “I’m not a carry person. I just don’t feel a need for that.”

Diane Battey of Sisters had an interest in getting a firearm for self-protection.

“My husband died in 2015,” she said. “I live by myself. I have a dog and a parrot.”

She had fired rifles long ago, but she had never fired a handgun before taking a class. The thorough grounding gave her a sense of comfort, but real confidence is built on the range, where she is now a regular. She started with a Heritage single-action revolver in the quiet, no-kick .22lr caliber. Then she worked her way up in caliber and capacity.

“I’ve got seven pistols now,” she said — ranging from a .380 automatic and a 9 mm, to a .38 revolver.

“I always take my original revolver [to the range] just as a warm-up pistol and I rotate through all of them.”

She’s also shot trap and skeet with a shotgun and done some shooting with rifles, which isn’t her thing.

“I just didn’t care for it,” she said. “I like my handguns much better.”

She’s very happy to have discovered this new discipline.

“I would encourage anyone to do it,” she said. “Not only is it good protection, it’s fun. I really enjoy it.”

Jeri Buckmann, who recently retired from the [Sisters Area Chamber of Commerce](#), had been around guns, but had always been more-or-less indifferent to them.

“My dad had guns,” she said, “but I was never really interested in doing it... I’d just never really been into it. Bob (her husband) had always been into doing all that, so we wanted to share an interest.”

Buckmann didn’t want to just go out plinking.

“I wanted to be really knowledgeable, not just in shooting a gun, but how to take care of it, and different types,” she said.

Like Battey, she found herself really enjoying it. She got herself a .380 and she and Bob stored up ammo — which has been in short supply — through the winter.

“Bob and I go out every chance we can,” she said. “At first I was a little intimidated by it, but after a while it was, ‘This is what we do — we go out a couple of times a week and target shoot.’”



She and Bob also obtained concealed carry permits.

Buckmann noted that her son, Adam, and daughter, Sarah, are both accomplished marksmen.

“They were a bit surprised that this is what mom was going to do,” she said with a chuckle.

For more information on Lady Gets A Gun, visit <https://ladygetsagun.com/>

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