

Virtual gun range opens in Island City

By **DAVIS CARBAUGH**
The Observer



Robert Minarich, co-owner of the new simulated gun range, Sim Shot, in Island City, demonstrates a boar-hunting simulation on Friday, Jan. 21, 2022.

ISLAND CITY — A first-of-its-kind shooting range recently marked its grand opening in town.

Sim Shot, a virtual shooting range that focuses on entertainment and firearm safety, opened its doors for business on Friday, Jan. 21. Owner Robert Minarich and the team at Sim Shot hope to create a unique new entertainment venue in Northeastern Oregon, as well as a hub for promoting responsible firearm usage.

“We want it to be that fun atmosphere. We’re trying to bring something fun and exciting to town to give people something to do,” he said. “Beyond entertainment, we also really want to promote safe, responsible gun ownership.”

Top simulation technology

Sim Shot is more than just an arcade, with the industry’s top simulation technology creating realistic shooting scenarios in more than 40 simulated options. With an entertainment concept modeled similar to Top Golf and bowling alleys, the business serves a primary purpose of entertainment for all ages. In addition, an array of training exercises promote gun safety and learning opportunities at the virtual range.

The new business is located at 10200 W. First St., Island City, near where Island Avenue meets Highway 82, and is owned by Minarich and his parents, John and Beverly. The location, which the owners and employees spent all summer renovating, offers four bays for simulated shooting. Each bay has a projector with 42 total simulation options, with hunting and entertainment games available as well as drills that simulate official shooting qualifications.

The technology includes a shot camera connected to each projector, which is calibrated through a computer. An invisible laser is shot out of each gun, allowing for accurate shooting simulations — much more precise than a run-of-the-mill arcade shooting game.

“We can be extremely accurate, down to the pixel,” Minarich said. “Shot placement is very accurate and people will find that they have to aim down the sight posts to get an accurate shot.”

Genesis of the idea

Minarich and his father, who are also co-owners of Windhill Holsters and Alpine Alarm, came up with the idea while attending SHOT Show in Las Vegas in early 2020.

“We were just roaming around looking at stuff and were talking about how cool it would be to have an indoor gun range here in town,” Minarich said. “We had a blast doing it. We walked away and started scratching our heads, thinking that we can do something with it.”

Minarich partnered with David Chaney, an employee

at Sim Shot who had a similar vision for the opportunities of a virtual shooting range in La Grande. The business model caters toward entertainment options, including bookings for parties, business gatherings, group sessions and more. As for the firearm safety aspect, Minarich emphasized the importance of treating the virtual range and the equipment as if it were real. The training sessions offer the opportunity to learn and improve firearm techniques.

“We’re basically going to let people have fun with it, but if they want instruction, training or advice on how to shoot we’ll help with that,” he said. “We can analyze their shooting and they can also book private training sessions with us as well.”

Sim Shot currently offers concealed carry classes, private training sessions and judgmental training sessions. These drills put the individuals in a real-world scenario, involving anything from a traffic stop to a school shooting — and the instructor can control the simulation in order to analyze the user’s instincts and shooting skills.

environment and see how you respond to it,” Minarich said.

Other simulated shooting sessions include a virtual shooting range, which will allow Sim Shot to replicate the actual training and tests involved in attaining shooting qualifications — including a planned simulation that emulates the International Defensive Pistol Association’s training model.

“We’re going to be holding concealed carry classes here,” Minarich said. “Once they get done with the class, we can actually put them in a simulated range environment and they can do their qualifications and get familiar.”

Minarich also stated that Sim Shot would be more than willing to offer its services to law enforcement for training purposes.

Sim Shot is currently

offering bookings, with walk-in sessions available if a bay is open. Sessions are sold in 25- or 55-minute increments. One person can book a half hour session for \$35, two people can book an hour for \$65 and three to four people can book an hour-long session for \$80. The range is open Tuesday through Sunday.

Sim Shot is the only range of its kind in the region, and the owners are open to possibilities moving forward. With few shooting ranges in Eastern Oregon, Sim Shot is looking to become a popular entertainment and firearm safety venue for Union County and surrounding areas.

“We want to serve the entire Eastern Oregon community,” Minarich said. “If people want to come in from Pendleton, Baker, Wallowa County, come on down.”

“It basically puts you in a real-life environment, where you’re looking at the screen and we put you into that

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