

Crime February 28, 2013 // by Natalie Harms // 2 Comments

UH graduate student offers guns as crime deterrent

Amid a nation divided on gun control, a spotlight has been shone on a UH graduate student and his nonprofit organization, which will give a gun to residents of a mid- to high-crime Houston area.

The Armed Citizen Project, created by public administration graduate student Kyle Coplan, will provide residents of a small community with a single-shot shotgun after significant background checks. The arms are not intended to be used; rather to prevent criminal activity.

“Our hypothesis is that criminals have no intention of dying in your hallway. We seek to use their fear as a crime deterrent,” Coplan said.

Coplan said he will cultivate that fear by raising awareness for the project. The project will start locally but an exact neighborhood has yet to be determined.

Coplan said he is interested in making his program widespread.

“We are going to start in Houston, but we are going to very quickly become a national company.”

The project began as a white paper for Coplan’s graduate program. A white paper is a report on a public policy issue, said James Thurmond, director of the Master of Public Administration program. The student’s goal with a white paper is to persuade while informing the audience about its position.

While the idea was conceptualized for UH, the University has no involvement in the actual execution.

Despite its brief existence, it is an official nonprofit with a staff.

“I just had the idea on Jan. 23rd, so this is just a month out. I did some volunteer work for a WWII veteran, who had two purple hearts,” Copland said. “His house was broken into and vandalized and I volunteered to help (him). When I saw what happened and it really upset me I got to thinking about crime deterrents.”

The project is currently targeting single female or handicapped participants, Coplan said.

Despite Coplan’s hard work and good intentions, he and the University have received criticism from outside parties.

“Three inquiries (to UH about the project) were received with two being more negative,” Thurmond said.

While Coplan faces criticism, he said he believes that the negative feedback is not based on his study’s merit. He said there is an initial knee-jerk reaction to his study.

“When it comes down to it, if people aren’t supportive, then they are just anti-gun rights,” Coplan said. “My question to them is ‘Then who should have a gun?’”

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