

an hour to an hour and a half with them, teaching them about firearms and finding a firearm that fits them. We don't just tell them to come and buy a gun. We find a firearm to fit them just like your favorite shoes." Guns, Ryker said, are merely tools. It is the person who wields the gun, not the gun itself, that causes violence and therefore, gun training, according to Ryker, is the most effective way to reduce gun violence. "To me, guns are just a tool. It's just a bit of metal. You can use them to kill food, you can use them to kill people, but that's the choice of the person who's using it, not the gun," Ryker said. "So, training people who can possess guns can help them make the right choice and choose to use guns for good, not evil."



WITH GREAT POWER: Don Perkins, attendee of the upcoming NRA convention and owner of firearm store Bare Arms, converses with a customer about guns. Perkins said guns, like other tools, may cause evil or good, but responsibility ultimately lies with the wielder. NIVEDHA MEYAPPAN / PHOTO ILLUSTRATIONS

GUNS ARE CREATED FOR VIOLENCE

Junior Felicia Adkins woke up on Dec. 8, 2013 to tragic news from her mother. Aubrey Peters, a 16-year-old girl from Noblesville who was one of Adkins's close childhood friends, was shot. "Honestly, at first I didn't believe it. I thought, 'There's no way. There's just no

way.' I just broke down and cried," Adkins said. According to court documents, Peters died from wounds inflicted by a semi-automatic gunshot. The man who shot Peters pleaded not guilty, stating that the death was unintentional. He was charged with reckless homicide and pointing a firearm. "There's so much I never got to say to her; that's probably my biggest regret. But I've learned that you can't get angry or really hateful about this kind of stuff, if a loved one is affected by gun violence. It isn't going to make the pain go away," Adkins said. However, Peters' death is not unheard

of. According to americanprogress.org, two people die each day in Indiana due to a gun-related incident. In fact, 2013 was the worst year yet for gun violence. The future legality of firearms in Indiana is still an ongoing battle. Tomorrow, the National Rifle Association (NRA) will begin hosting its national convention in Indianapolis. The NRA expects a large turnout; however, not everyone will be supporting the event. Nicki McNally, Indiana Chapter leader for Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America, a grassroots organization that has become one of the largest organizations to advocate for common-sense gun legislation,



* FOR MORE ABOUT GUN LEGISLATION, TURN TO PAGE 7 OR PAGE 31.

been very vocal in the preservation of these second amendment rights that we are legally given, and so it is only right for us to protect our rights and, in turn, our state." William Dowden, legislative director of the Indiana Rifle and Pistol Association, the state-level chapter of the NRA, said tightening gun controls would not only prevent citizens from protecting themselves, but also undermine the second amendment rights granted to citizens by the U.S. constitution. "It is our right that our forefathers gave us to carry firearms," Dowden said. "Therefore, the Indiana Rifle and Pistol Association has

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said the NRA should not be supported in its quest to remove the limit on gun purchases. "We need to have background checks for all gun sales and limit the amount of ammunition that can be purchased. It isn't about taking away people's rights to protect themselves; it's about creating a generally more safe environment," McNally said. According to the NRA Institute for Legal Action, Indiana residents are not required to hold permits allowing them to keep handguns, shotguns or rifles. In addition, there is no law requiring Indiana residents to hold a permit to carry rifles or shotguns. "The fact of the matter is that Aubrey's

death could've been prevented. People want to have guns lying around, but they don't know how to use them. If you don't know how to manage a gun, you definitely shouldn't be able to own one," Adkins said. The push for stricter gun control in Indiana is going backwards, according to McNally, due to the new bill that was signed in March, which allows adults to keep guns locked in their cars on school grounds. "Our gun laws are incredibly loose. In Indiana, you can be a convicted felon, or you can have a restraining order against you, and you can go to a gun show, find an unlicensed dealer and purchase a gun

without a background check. It needs to be tightened," McNally said. Whether or not guns should be allowed in school is an issue that has been debated continuously for many years. In light of the Newtown, CT school shooting that resulted in 20 elementary students' deaths, the dispute has increased significantly. "Thinking of my first grade daughter and her classroom, thinking about what those children faced in Newtown that day was too much for me. It pushed me over the edge. These new gun laws could allow any random person to take a gun with them wherever

they go, now even to schools," McNally said. However, according to McNally, change is possible for the future. Moms Demand Action regularly meets up in Indianapolis and participates in "stroller jams," in which they hand out information on common-sense gun laws. "We have to get the word out, how many guns get purchased without background checks. That could have a huge impact. People need to contact their legislators, both state and federal, and let them know that we demand background checks for all gun sales. And tell them that you support ammunition limits and that you support the assault weapon ban," McNally said.

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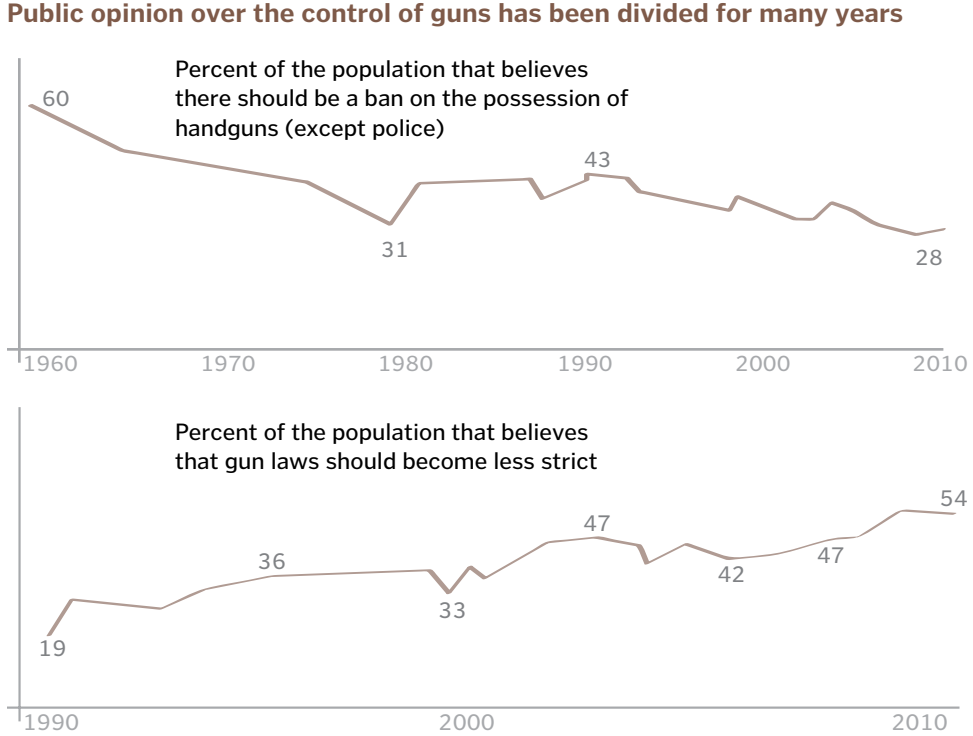
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THE GREAT DIVIDE

DENNIS YANG / GRAPHICS GALLUP / SOURCE



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LOOKING FORWARD: Junior Felicia Adkins said she has learned to deal with the death of her close friend, Aubrey Peters. "You can't get angry or really hateful... If a loved one is affected by gun violence," she said, "It isn't going to make the pain go away."

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