



Powering meaningful change

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
JANUARY 16, 2019**

**\*\*\***

## **FIREARM SAFETY EXPO BRINGS LAW ENFORCEMENT AND GUN SAFETY COMPANIES TOGETHER**

More than 100 law enforcement officers, gun-safety developers, investors and public officials gathered at the Oak Creek campus of the Milwaukee Area Technical College (MATC) Wednesday for a Firearm Safety Expo to see what the future of firearms looks like. Hosted by Common Ground, the expo innovators presented technology incorporating gun safety features such as biometric locks, user authentication, and theft-tracking technology, all of which has the potential to reduce the number of people killed by guns every year in America.

Each year in the United States, nearly 1,300 children die and almost 6,000 more are injured from gunshot wounds. Thousands more people kill themselves using someone else's gun. Moreover, nearly a quarter of a million guns are reported stolen from homes, stores and vehicles annually in America. These guns become the supply of weapons used for everyday crimes in the streets. At the expo, eight product developers from across the country and Switzerland, showcased emerging technology that will help reduce theft and unauthorized or accidental use of guns.

Presentations by the developers were preceded by remarks from Mayor Tom Barrett, District Attorney John Chisholm, County Executive Chris Abele and Wauwatosa Chief of Police Barry Weber, all supporters of Common Ground's work in this area. After the presentations, officers and police science students from MATC had a chance to inspect prototypes, perhaps overcoming fears that a given safety device would impede use of a gun in a genuine emergency.

"Today is a great day because we will have a chance to hear from developers who are trailblazers in user-authenticated technology for firearms," said Chief Weber, as proceedings got under way.

Fifteen percent of U.S. gun purchases annually are made by local and state law enforcement agencies, a share large enough to move the gun industry to place a higher priority on research and development of safety technology, if law enforcement begins asking for it.

Such is the assumption made by Common Ground and its parent organization, the Metro Industrial Areas Foundation, in developing their market-based approach called Do Not Stand Idly By (DNSIB). Now six years old, DNSIB has received support from over 130 jurisdictions nationwide, including the City of Milwaukee, but also those further afield such as Seattle, Boston, Los Angeles and Miami-Dade.

“I like the approach that Common Ground has taken to encourage products that actually save lives,” said Milwaukee County District Attorney John Chisholm. “I’ve taken these ideas to community safety meetings and even national prosecutors’ meetings – it’s amazing to see peoples’ eyes light up when they see the obvious potential of these products.”

Health care officials, investors and others with an interest also attended. Dr. Stephen Hargarten, director of the Comprehensive Injury Center and associate dean of the Medical College of Wisconsin was one of the sponsors of the event.

It has long been argued by Hargarten and other healthcare professionals that a public health approach is necessary in examining the reasons behind America’s high gun death rate. Doctors and healthcare systems can play a large role in addressing this vexing issue by educating families about their safety habits at home. Just as they implore the use of infant car seats and seat belts, they can encourage firearm security with the use of gun safety products.

“Addressing the safety features of cars has had independent benefits in reducing car crash deaths,” said Hargarten. “The same can be applied to safety designs for guns. These design features are intended to reduce unauthorized access to this product – in my opinion a common sense approach that all sectors of civil society can support.”

Among the attendees were several Wisconsin State Representatives, and officials from US Senators Baldwin's and Durbin's offices. Also on hand were some large institutional investors, such as the California State Teachers' Retirement System and the Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility, as well as locally-based investment firms such as Riverwater Partners.

But the focus was on law enforcement and their reaction to these products. "When this technology becomes available on the market," said Chief Weber, "I hope we all will look back to today and see it as one of the pivotal moments that helped America's law enforcement become open to the idea of smart firearm products."

The forum was presented by Do Not Stand Idly By, a campaign of Southeastern Wisconsin Common Ground and the Metro Industrial Areas Foundation.

\*\*\*

**ABOUT COMMON GROUND:** Southeastern Wisconsin Common Ground (CG) is a 501(c)3 organization of congregations, religious groups, small businesses, non-profits, schools, unions and neighborhood associations whose mission is to address critical social issues in creative, non-partisan ways. CG's 40+ member organizations live and work in Milwaukee, Ozaukee, Washington and Waukesha Counties. Common Ground is part of a national network affiliated with the Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF), the oldest and largest institution for professional community organizing in the United States.

For more information on Common Ground, please visit: [www.commongroundwi.org](http://www.commongroundwi.org) or call Common Ground Leader Laura Vuchetich at (414) 949-1403.

On site media contacts:

- Jon Olson [jonolson7758@sbcglobal.net](mailto:jonolson7758@sbcglobal.net)
- Martha Mainland [orkneym1@wi.rr.com](mailto:orkneym1@wi.rr.com)