

Amid peaceful arms



STAFF PHOTO BY BETH BLACK

Michael Coker relies on his Reiki methods in his teaching of firearm safety and handling. Coker maintains that each shot must be done slowly, with complete focus and intent.

Coral Springs instructor offers lesson in duality

BY DEBORAH WORK
Staff Writer

To the uninitiated, Michael Coker is a study in contrasts.

The soulful Coral Springs reiki master is also a state certified firearms and defensive tactics instructor. He is a licensed massage therapist and a certified personal trainer. He knows his way around the body's anatomy and can chart every chakra; but he's equally adept as a certified chief range officer.

And if that wasn't enough, as an ordained minister he conducts meditation workshops throughout Broward County.

But for Coker, a former Broward Sheriff's Office deputy and Miami-Dade County corrections officer, these elements are not contraries. But rather the yin and yang that make the whole.

"If you understand [the Chinese philosophy of] yin and yang, you understand the importance of balance," said Coker, the 49-year-old founder and owner of Florida Firearm Safety. "If you focus solely on the divine feminine, you're forgetting the divine masculine. And then you're out of balance; there's no ground."

Even during the past year of highly-publicized mass shootings, terror, and heightened vigilance, Coker remains a man at perfect peace.

"When I teach a class, I teach how not to use a gun unless you absolutely have to," he said. "The last thing I want [students] to do is shoot. I teach people to be aware of their surroundings at all times to help avoid trouble. But in a worst case scenario, I'd rather have something and not need it, than need something and not have it."

It's a balance that Coker knows well. In

fact, he knows firsthand what it's like to be out of balance. While working in law enforcement, he said, he became headstrong.

"When my career was progressing rapidly, I really wanted to succeed," he said. "I was pushing, pushing, pushing, and I lost myself in that."

After 15 years, he left law enforcement to study massage therapy and reiki healing and even gave away all of his guns.

"But one day I realized I was once again missing half of myself," Coker said. "I recognized there is a need for enlightened firearms training and that I can provide it from a spiritual perspective."

Roberto Santiago is a local gun owner who met Coker a year ago while taking one of his courses.

"Training under [him] at the range is a

See COKER, 5

COKER *Continued from Page 1*

mental and physical journey, and you leave better skilled, relaxed and at peace," said Santiago, also a Nichiren Buddhist. Santiago said he initially wanted to learn how to defend himself.

"It seems like a dichotomy," he said. "But shooting is very spiritual, very Buddhist, in that I'm responsible for doing this correctly and the key to doing that is relaxation, confidence and knowledge."

Most impressive, Santiago said, is Coker's thoroughness in his classes,

which includes one specifically for women.

"He focuses on the responsibility of the law abiding citizen," he said. "Students understand that ignorance of the law is no excuse, and that safety is paramount."

But personal responsibility is key to Coker's philosophy.

"Having a gun reminds me that I have the ability to destroy someone's life and I don't want to do that," he said. "It's a reminder that I am responsible for my actions."

"And should trouble find me, I still may not shoot," he said, bowing slightly, his fingertips pressed together in silent prayer. "Maybe that person will look in my eyes and say 'Damn man, I'm sorry,' and walk away."

To learn more about Michael Coker's firearm safety classes, call 954-328-1599 or email Michael@floridafirearmsafety.net. Visit Universal-ReikiCenter.com.

Deb Work can be reached at dwork@tribpub.com.

Sun Sentinel
Broward County
Daily 347,700
December 13, 2015