

THE CAROLINIAN NEWSPAPER

Celebrating 84 Years Of Service To The Community

Helping American Heroes Achieve
the Dream of Homeownership
Popular with veteran homebuyers looking for a flexible down payment.

SouthState

VA LOAN
LEARN M
Member FDIC. Equal Ho.

Empowering Women Through Firearm Safety Training

December 31, 2024 0 0

By: Jordan Meadows, Staff Writer

Dr. Joy Allen's journey from clinical research executive to firearms trainer and community advocate is defined by a passion for empowerment and a commitment to creating safe spaces for women in the world of firearms education.

Based in Raleigh, North Carolina, Allen founded InHER Piece, a pioneering business that offers inclusive and accessible firearms training, personal protection education, and community-building opportunities for women from all walks of life.

Allen's relationship with firearms began at a crossroads in her life. When she turned 40, she wanted to tick an item off her bucket list: learning to shoot.

"It was honestly just a bucket list type thing—I thought it'd be fun. I wasn't necessarily a fan of guns but I wasn't really against them either, I was just kind of impartial," Allen said.

However, as she began attending more classes, she noticed gaps in the training landscape—particularly for women and people of color. The high costs of training, the discomfort of often being the only woman (and woman of color) in rural, male-dominated spaces, and the overall lack of inclusive, affordable options led Allen to create a solution.

This was the seed that would grow into E3 Personal Defense and later, InHER Piece. In 2020, in the midst of a politically charged election year and the uncertainties brought by the COVID-19 pandemic, Allen saw an opportunity to create something different.

There was a growing sense of fear in the community, especially among women and women of color, who felt their safety was increasingly at risk and were unsure where to turn for help. Allen saw this as a chance to create a space where women could not only learn about firearm safety but also gain confidence and camaraderie.

InHER Piece was born. It started with a simple idea: hold an event at a shooting range to bring women together for a day of empowerment. To Allen's surprise, the turnout was overwhelming—over 65 women came to the event during a time of widespread quarantine.

"From there it just kinda grew. The ladies were really hungry to learn, so we started spreading out doing more events and classes across North Carolina and started working with other organizations to go to conventions, meetings...at the time we were the first in the area," Allen said.

What sets InHER Piece apart is its dedication to inclusivity. Allen's approach is simple but powerful: treat everyone with respect, smile, and prioritize safety. The focus is not just on learning how to shoot, but on creating an environment where women from all backgrounds—regardless of race, socioeconomic status, or experience level—feel comfortable, supported, and valued.

"At the end of the day, everybody has a right to vote. Everybody has a right to free speech. But for some reason, even though we all have a right to bear arms... unfortunately, that right is challenged just by not having enough money or because someone disagrees with your lifestyle," Allen said.

One of the innovative features of InHER Piece is its Pistol Qualification Program. Designed for women to track their progress and measure their skills, the program is voluntary and open to everyone—whether they're just starting out or looking to challenge themselves further. Participants receive a button, patch, certificate, and a congratulatory letter upon completion, creating a sense of accomplishment and confidence.

Allen emphasizes that InHER Piece is not just about firearms. It's about building confidence. "At the end of the day, this isn't really about a firearm. It's fun and it's something to focus our attention onto, but ultimately InHER Piece is about building confidence because of whatever situation people may be in," Allen said.

In addition to training, InHER Piece partners with local community organizations to extend its reach. By supporting mentorship programs and offering discounted training to those in need, InHER Piece is empowering women not just to protect themselves but to become leaders in their own communities.

"If we're not sharing that confidence with others it's not worth much at the end of the day," Allen says, stressing the importance of community support.

Allen is also focused on addressing common misconceptions about firearms. For starters, the belief that guns are inherently dangerous if you have children in the home, according to Allen, is simply not true.

Another misconception is that simply owning a firearm automatically makes you safe. Allen challenges this notion, emphasizing that without proper training and a solid understanding of firearm safety, owning a gun does not guarantee protection. She points out that many women purchase firearms for self-defense, but without the necessary education, they may end up being victimized by those very firearms.

One of Allen's proudest achievements is her role in diversifying the firearms instruction community. When she started InHER Piece, there were only three Black female firearms instructors in all of North Carolina—Allen was the only one with multiple certifications. By the end of InHER Piece's first year, every Black instructor in the state had gone through InHER Piece's programs.

As InHER Piece continues to grow, Allen has her sights set on the future—particularly on reaching younger generations and ensuring they understand both firearm safety and the importance of the Second Amendment. She believes in making firearm training accessible and affordable to all, regardless of their background or financial situation.

“The biggest accomplishment: when I started InHER Piece, there were three Black female instructors of firearms in the entire state. Of those three, I was the only one to have more than one certification. By the time InHER Piece finished its first year, every single Black instructor in the state of North Carolina came through InHER Piece. We were able to diversify the instructor pool.

Allen's journey from a curious beginner to a leader in the firearms training community represents her belief in empowerment, inclusivity, and self-confidence. Through InHER Piece, she has created a supportive space where women can challenge themselves, grow in their skills, and build lasting relationships.

For Allen, it's not just about firearms—it's about ensuring that every woman who walks through the doors of InHER Piece leaves feeling stronger, more confident, and supported in her journey of self-empowerment.