

OCTOBER 2012 HPD POSITIVE INTERACTION PROGRAM  
Page Williams, Ashford Hollow delegate to HPD

The October 18 Westside Divisional Positive Interaction Program was presented by Stephen Daniels, a civilian employee of HPD's Public Affairs Division. Daniels is an Active Shooter, which means he trains HPD officers to respond to the escalating violence of mass murder in the workplace, or in schools, or in public venues, or even in houses of worship. Daniels emphasized to us that the probability of surviving such an attack depended on developing a survival mindset. Most victims have no idea how to respond or what to do when there is an active shooter whose only goal is to see us die.

At the time of our first active shooter in Texas, Charles Whitman at the University of Texas in 1966, the most common weapon for police officers was a .38 revolver, which is no match for a sniper's rifle at the top of a tower. Now you can expect officers to have a long gun in the trunk of their cars. Law enforcement has realized that their most effective response to such situations is to reach the shooter as fast as possible. That means that they will pass by the dead and dying, even an officer down, to achieve the goal of taking down the shooter. And it means that you must not distract them from this goal; you must remain calm and keep your hands visible and empty so as to not represent any appearance of threat.

The City of Houston, with support from the Department of Homeland Security, has an excellent video, "Surviving an Active Shooter Event", and Daniels encouraged us all to google "RUN HIDE FIGHT youtube" and watch it with our families. The first, and preferable, option is to escape - break windows, jump out of second story windows, leave your belongings behind, do not wait for others - get far away from the shooter as fast as possible. If running is not possible, then shelter in place - turn off lights, lock and fortify doors. If all else fails, be prepared to fight for your life - time is not on your side, so engage the attacker at the first opportunity.

Aurora. Columbine. Virginia Tech. What if we had been there? Would we have survived? To help us prepare, we should consider in advance our best escape route if faced with an active shooter in the building. Or consider where you could hide, or take cover. Think about what objects are weapons if you cannot run or hide: heavy books, chairs, fire extinguishers or letter openers.

Is the idea of tackling an armed shooter unthinkable? Daniels also recommended that we google "Alon Stivi youtube." Alon is an Israeli survival expert and you can watch his video "Last Resort Active Shooter Survival Measures." Should you ever face such a situation, this video will empower you and give you confidence to act, rather than react, so that you can be a survivor rather than a victim. This was the best PIP program we've had in 2012.