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### **FGCU Grad Defies Stereotype For Success in Firearms Industry**

*Small business hopes to build local following of women interested in shooting sports and using firearms for personal defense*

FORT MYERS, Fla. When you picture a business owner in the firearms or shooting sports industries, you most likely do not picture a 5'1" petite blonde woman. However, sometimes stereotypes prove to be false and such is the case for firearms instructor and FGCU graduate Sara Ryan. Mrs. Ryan is founder of AthenasArmory.com and Athena's Armory Defensive Training and women like her make up the fastest growing segment of the firearms industry. In fact, women concealed carry permits have increased 270% since 2007.

Sara's interest in firearms has mirrored this industry growth. Sara moved here from Minnesota as a teenager, finished high school at Southwest Florida Christian Academy, and then graduated from Florida Gulf Coast University in 2010 as a Biology major. Shortly after graduation she and her husband decided to start a family and that is when the story takes a turn.

"Starting a family changed a lot about the way we viewed the world. You hear jokes about mama bear protecting her cubs, but there is a lot of truth to that instinct," she explains.

After taking some basic firearms classes and getting frustrated with certain aspects of a man-centric industry, Sara saw an opportunity to become an instructor and help other women like herself. She found that she really enjoyed shooting and that the teaching part came naturally. After a few years of skill development and a lot of trial and error with various products, now she is hoping that other women and new shooters will find her experience and AthenasArmory.com to be a valuable resource in saving time and money.

With that goal in mind, AthenasArmory.com gives visitors the opportunity to learn, shop, and train. The e-commerce store offers concealed carry gear and firearms accessories for all types of shooters, but focuses on the needs of women by offering a variety of non-traditional holsters, fashionable range gear, handmade concealed carry purses and Swarovski crystal-infused bullet jewelry.

"We designed the website with women, who are mainly mobile users, in mind. We want it to be one of the easiest to use in the industry," explains Ryan.

Although the website is the centerpiece, Sara's passion is teaching. She loves helping new shooters develop the skills and, especially, the confidence to succeed.

"So many women are amazed at how well they shoot and how good they feel after getting over the initial hurdle of fear," she says.

At AthenasArmory.com/Train, you can find information about classes offered in the southwest Florida area. Sara and her husband Jason are both NRA certified instructors and Chief Range Safety Officers and teach a variety of beginner classes. In addition to their own classes, they have partnered with Frontline Firearms Training in Minneapolis to provide a wide range of more advanced training through a network of nationally recognized instructors.

*Athena's Armory provides gear and guidance for everyday personal defense. For more information, please visit*  
**AthenasArmory.com**

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