

Gun owners gather at Walnut Creek restaurant

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Contra Costa Times

Posted: 02/28/2010 08:36:48 PM PST

Updated: 02/28/2010 10:52:37 PM PST

WALNUT CREEK — Dozens of people turned out at a Walnut Creek pizzeria Sunday evening to eat, chat with friends and exercise their Second Amendment rights.

Gus Konstantaras was one the patrons who had his unloaded gun on his holster, displayed for anyone to see. Carrying a gun openly with the ammunition kept separate is legal in California and is nothing to fear, Konstantaras said.

"We are not vigilantes," the Antioch resident said. "We are not crime fighters. We don't go to venues to provoke or intimidate the criminal element."

On Saturday, men and women, armed with handguns strapped to their sides in holsters, fanned out across San Francisco's Baker Beach to help pick up trash and to increase awareness of gun owners' rights.

The event on Baker Beach comes after gun owners began walking into Starbucks and other businesses in Northern California and elsewhere to exercise their gun rights in states where people are allowed to openly carry firearms.

The open carriers, who say they are not an organized group, just like-minded people, have

been meeting at various coffee shops and restaurants in the East Bay to show that it's OK to carry weapons that way.

Konstantaras emphasized that carrying is not bad. He pointed to the family atmosphere with children playing and amiable social chatter at East Coast Pizza Bar and Grill.

Adnan Shahab said a criminal may avoid someone if they see they are armed, or could help in a case where someone's life is being threatened, even if the gun has to be loaded.

"There's a two-second disadvantage," said Shahab. "I'd rather have a two-second disadvantage than no advantage."

Jessie Grunner, the pizzeria's owner, said she welcomed the open carriers after seeing the group getting turned away from other businesses in town.

Grunner said she was neutral on the issue, but had no problem with Sunday's event.

"They've been very gracious, patient and really a pleasure as far as customers go," said Grunner.

The Associated Press contributed to this story.

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