<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/12/15/opinion/guns-buyback-program.html?rref=collection%2Ftimestopic%2FGun%20Control>

**Guns Under the Christmas Tree, and Transformed Into Tools**

Beyond the usual barometers of the Christmas marketing season — this year’s Fingerling toy is a must-have for children — there is the Black Friday tally of holiday gun buyers, which this year broke all previous records.

For the single-day binge of gun sales measured annually after Thanksgiving, the F.B.I. received 203,086 requests for background checks. This is the most ever in a single day, topping last year’s Black Friday high of 185,713 requests. (No immediate tweets from President Trump, the candidate of the National Rifle Association, that this is huge in making America great again.)

There were undoubtedly even more guns actually sold, since an F.B.I. request can cover a buyer’s multiple purchases. All seasonal evidence indicates that AR-15 assault rifles, the battlefield knockoffs familiar to so many Americans in the relentless tales of mass shootings, will be under many Christmas trees. “Bang for the buck!” enthused the blog post of one seasonal shopper. “I picked up a Bushmaster carbine with rebate for around $400 … I couldn’t be happier.”

Not to crimp such holiday cheer, but the police department in New Haven, Conn., plans a small biblical twist to America’s avid gun culture: a gun buyback on Saturday in which prison inmate volunteers will transform surrendered weapons into gardening tools to be provided to schools so students can plant and harvest vegetables for soup kitchens.

This takes the swords-into-plowshares dictum to a creative new level. The police running the buyback promise to ask no questions of anyone turning in a weapon. In return, they offer gift cards worth $25 per small, Derringer-like handgun. Rifles and shotguns come in at $50 each, pistols and revolvers at $100, and high-powered assault weapons are the most prized here, too, at $200.

The police worked out the buyback in cooperation with [RAWtools Inc.](http://rawtools.org/), a gun safety program that specializes in breaking apart firearms and reforging gun barrels into safer things, and the [Newtown Foundation](http://foundation.newtownaction.org/), created after the massacre of 20 schoolchildren and six staff members five years ago at [Sandy Hook Elementary School](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/12/15/opinion/death-in-connecticut.html) in Newtown.

[Continue reading the main story](https://www.nytimes.com/2017/12/15/opinion/guns-buyback-program.html?rref=collection%2Ftimestopic%2FGun%20Control#story-continues-2)

No one expects drastic results in crime statistics. But buybacks are considered important by police officials in various cities for getting some guns off the streets and out of owners’ badly secured homes. They are a tangible commitment to gun safety, particularly as elected politicians prove largely useless on the subject. Over the past six years, the New Haven police have collected nearly 700 guns in buybacks, run at government expense, in which the firearms were broken apart and discarded.

The new reforging approach is supported by [Gun by Gun](http://www.gunxgun.org/), a safety group run by private donations, and Yale-New Haven Hospital, whose emergency room chief, [Gail D’Onofrio](http://www.newhavenindependent.org/index.php/archives/entry/from_guns_to_plowshares/), speaks from the harshest experience: “Fewer guns means fewer deaths.” If nothing else, the forces at work in the plowshare buyback offer a humble reminder that there can be more to the gun safety issue than the monolithic standoff in [Washington](https://www.nytimes.com/2017/11/12/opinion/guns-congress-shootings.html).

“You’re taking a weapon of death and turning it into the complete opposite, which is life,” said Steven Yanovsky of the Newtown Foundation. “So you go from a rifle or a handgun to carrots.”