

# The London Free Press

## Taser parties scare up new marketing niche

Sat, January 5, 2008

By CHRIS KAHN, AP

GILBERT, ARIZ. -- Before she lets them shoot her little pink stun gun, Dana Shafman ushers her new friends to the living room sofa for a serious chat about the fears she believes they all share.

"The worst nightmare for me is, while I'm sleeping, someone coming in my home," Shafman says, drawing a few solemn nods from the gathered women. Shafman, 34, of Phoenix, says she knows how they feel. She says she used to stash knives under her pillow for protection.

Welcome, she says, to the Taser party.

On the coffee table, Shafman spreads out Taser's C2 "personal protector" weapons that the company is marketing to the public. It doesn't take long before the women are lined up in the hallway, whooping as they take turns blasting at a metallic target.

"C'mon!" she says. "Give it a shot."

Shafman isn't an employee for Scottsdale, Ariz.-based Taser International, a company whose products and their use have come under fire in Canada recently in the wake of the death of a Polish visitor after a confrontation with police at the Vancouver airport.

She's an independent entrepreneur who's been selling Tasers the way her mother's generation sold plastic food storage containers.

As a single woman who lives alone, Shafman says she's the perfect pitchwoman for Taser as it makes a renewed push to sell weapons to families, broadening its current business with police forces.

The company agrees. Taser officials like Shafman's homespun sales tactics so much that they plan to build a living room set at the International Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas and have Shafman hold a Taser party for buyers and dealers. The CES, which runs from Monday to Thursday, is the world's largest tech trade show.

Taser doesn't expect its dealers to start imitating Shafman. But spokesperson Steve Tuttle says company officials think people can learn from her approach.

"When I talk about Taser, I come across as a salesman," Tuttle says. "When you see her it comes across as very real."

Shafman, a freelance construction consultant, says she always had a natural interest in self-defence products. She loved the idea of the Taser, which would allow her to stop an attacker from across the room without getting physical.

She tried moonlighting as a door-to-door Taser salesperson. But years of negative media coverage about Taser made it tough.

"I got tired of being pushed out of people's offices," she says. "Nobody wants to purchase a product that they think is lethal or going to kill somebody."