

00:00;19;20 - 00:00;44;20

Stephen Gutowski

All right. Welcome, ladies and gentlemen, to another episode of the Weekly Reload Podcast. I'm your host, Stephen Gutowski. I'm a CNN contributor and the founder of thereload.com, where you can head over and sign up today for our free newsletter. If you want to keep up to date with what's going on with Guns in America from a sober, serious perspective that focuses on hard news reporting and analysis over hot takes, an opinion.

00:00;44;23 - 00:01;09;26

Stephen Gutowski

This week on the show, we are going to be discussing a new nonprofit that, has come up to try and implement some of the, mass shooting prevention or mass violence prevention techniques that we've talked about previously on the show, in the real world. So, to do that, I have Jordan Estrada, the director and founder of.

00:01;09;26 - 00:01;18;11

Stephen Gutowski

Let's Talk to Them, brand new 501 C3 nonprofit. With us this week. Welcome to the show, Jordan. Thank you for joining us.

00:01;18;13 - 00:01;20;08

Jordan Estrada

Thank you for having me. Stephen.

00:01;20;10 - 00:01;24;08

Stephen Gutowski

Can you tell people just a little bit more about yourself and and the group before we get going here?

00:01;24;11 - 00:01;50;20

Jordan Estrada

Yeah, absolutely. My name is Jordan Estrada. My background was in the national security industry. I've also worked as a volunteer, first responder for eight years. And in that work, I had frequent exposure, to basically preparation and, you know, the whole efforts to stop mass shootings, a lot of it on the prevention side, you know, as a first responder, as a, security consultant, all your work is about what happens if a, if a mass shooting is going to occur and how to prevent how to respond to that.

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Jordan Estrada

And throughout the throughout the many years I did that, it was always clear to me that response was never enough. You know, we had to do something much more proactive, much more upstream. And, really the incipient moment for me was in, 2022, the back to back mass shootings in Buffalo, New York and Uvalde, Texas. That was kind of the moment for me when all the all the all the research, all the, exposure I had to this to this, this, this phenomenon kind of came together and it it struck me that I had to I had to do something personally about it.

00:02;20;27 - 00:02;41;15

Jordan Estrada

So I brought together a group of, very talented people, that, that were within our, my network. And we basically had brainstorming session of, you know, what can we do in response? And from that brainstorming session came this incipient idea that everybody is talking about mass shooters, but nobody's trying to talk to them, you know, before they act to reach them, before they actually act.

00:02;41;15 - 00:03;13;21

Jordan Estrada

And what was very interesting to us and what formed kind of our, the, the, the problem statement that we set out to solve is that every other mental health, crisis, if you're struggling with any other, sort of whether it's eating disorders,

suicide, gambling addiction, drug, alcohol, if you research topics related to that, you will immediately get an abundance of resources designed to help you speaking directly to you, you know, acknowledging your problem, acknowledging that you're that you're having this struggle and offering solutions to help that.

00;03;13;24 - 00;03;33;27

Jordan Estrada

In contrast, we found no such approach for individuals who might be researching, or thinking about mass shootings if they're if they're online, you know, studying previous mass shooters, there's so much information about they're talking about that, but there's really very little speaking to that individual who's interested in this to de-escalate and deter them. And that's really what we decided.

00;03;33;27 - 00;03;38;23

Jordan Estrada

We, we had to do to, to kind of fill that gap and change that.

00;03;38;25 - 00;04;06;18

Stephen Gutowski

Interesting. Yes. I think that's that's absolutely true. And I, we were just reminded of, the need for this, this week where, where we saw an act of mass violence, a terrorist attack in, New Orleans on New Year's Day. And then obviously, we we had, before the Christmas and and New Year break, we, we saw a school shooting in Wisconsin as well.

00;04;06;20 - 00;04;29;20

Stephen Gutowski

And, you know, we'd had a relatively, relatively is, is the key word here, of course, relatively slow year in 2024 for these sort of mass shootings at least. But, it's very clear at this point now that that's not necessarily something that is, is, is going away anytime soon on its own and for sure.

00;04;29;20 - 00;05;03;01

Stephen Gutowski

And, you know, a lot of the discussion we have after these events, whether it's, this, mass killing with a, with a truck in New Orleans or a mass shooting at a school in Wisconsin, about laws restricting, firearms is a very common one. Or, you know, these other broader ideas of how to try and, you know, restrict, immigration or something like that to, to, weed out potential, terrorists.

00;05;03;03 - 00;05;26;12

Stephen Gutowski

Coming into the country or something, something along these lines. And, and the discussion is rarely centered on, reaching out to people who are in the kind of mental health spiral, that results in a self-starter terrorist attack or a mass act of violence of some sort. And and, you know, we've talked about on the show a lot in the past.

00;05;26;12 - 00;06;08;27

Stephen Gutowski

We've interviewed, a number of experts on this, and we just talked to, Catherine, Schweitzer, former FBI, agent who was in charge of the active shooter, reporting program there. We've we've talked to, Doctor James Densely, who's a professor, and wrote, co-wrote a book called The Violence Project, about how a lot of these attackers, whether it's this, person who pledged allegiance to ISIS before, you know, killing 15 people on New Year's Day, or it's the, the school shooter who wore the same shirt as the Columbine, killers.

00;06;09;00 - 00;06;51;13

Stephen Gutowski

You know, they they they go through a similar mental health spiral to get to the point that they end up carrying out these acts of violence. And there are a number of, identifying signs that this is happening to somebody along the way before they actually carry out the trigger. And there there's what, the violence Project calls off ramping that's possible for these people, and that they could be someone could intervene along that path and put them onto a different path so that they

don't end up committing violence.

00;06;51;15 - 00;07;15;20

Stephen Gutowski

And this is something that has happened in real life on many occasions in the past. They document some of them in, in the Violence Project. And but there hasn't to this point that I'm aware of been an organized effort to do that off ramping on a, on a like consistent basis and reach as many people going through this mental health spiral as possible.

00;07;15;20 - 00;07;39;29

Stephen Gutowski

Because oftentimes, I think we look at these perpetrators after they've carried out this horrible, these horrible acts as acts of evil, and you just sort of assume that are people who weren't reachable and couldn't be helped, that they're, you know, inherently bad or evil or what have you, instead of somebody who is, potentially could have been connected with and put on a different path.

00;07;39;29 - 00;07;58;03

Stephen Gutowski

And so it seems to me that that's what you're trying to do here in practice. So what what, are some of the the reasons that you, have decided to go this route? Well, what is some of the research that's inspired you? I mean, I think you've referenced the Violence Project on your website. Is that one of them?

00;07;58;05 - 00;08;05;09

Stephen Gutowski

Where did you get the ideas for how to reach these, these attackers before they carry out their their assaults?

00;08;05;11 - 00;08;26;13

Jordan Estrada

Sure. Yeah. So the violence project has definitely been an extremely instrumental in, in, guiding our approach. We we leaned very heavily on the works of, both James Dempsey and Jillian Peterson. So huge thanks to them for the for the work they put into that. It is, it is, very enlightening about, you know, not only why the how the problem progresses, but also how you can get involved.

00;08;26;13 - 00;08;50;18

Jordan Estrada

And, like you said, off ramp people. And really, the the idea we had is that we see that same off ramping for every other mental health, struggle, every other mental health struggle. We're using the same sort of off ramp approach as kind of a mental health best practice to to get people who are in the early stages of adopting some drastic action, whether it's, you know, suicide again, eating disorders, gambling addictions, any of these types of things.

00;08;50;21 - 00;09;19;13

Jordan Estrada

We are actively using that same, practice to off ramp people and everything else. And our question is, you know, why not use it? For, for mass shooters as well. And we talked to a number of researchers and they were like, yeah, absolutely. You know, that's a great we have, we've had an extensive advisory board of mental health experts, law enforcement psych us, psychiatric individuals, neuroscientists who have reviewed our approach and kind of signed off and given us, you know, the the green light that this is something that we should be doing.

00;09;19;16 - 00;09;47;11

Jordan Estrada

And, when you talk about, you know, the unreliability of these, these individuals, one of the, the key quotes, that really made an impact on me and kind of made, made it clear to me that we had to do this was, was a quote from the kind of the manifesto of the Buffalo Shooter, and he said that, every he said something to the effect of it's not a verbatim quote, but every time I have doubts about going through this, I get onto this, and board and kind of re-inspired myself.

00;09;47;14 - 00;10;03;07

Jordan Estrada

And this, this is, this was very this impacted me a lot because it shows us that these individuals, there's no guarantee that they're actually going to go through that. They experience doubts, uncertainties, just like everybody else, doing anything. And, when they have those doubts and go ahead.

00;10;03;08 - 00;10;14;07

Stephen Gutowski

So often they'll have, leakage of their plans, like they'll tell somebody or give, give a hint that they were going to carry this out or whatever. And, and that maybe is even a sort of a almost a cry for help in certain situations.

00;10;14;07 - 00;10;15;13

Jordan Estrada

Absolutely. Yes.

00;10;15;13 - 00;10;20;24

Stephen Gutowski

And yeah, you're saying those moments are the ones you're trying to, to capture just to reach these people.

00;10;20;29 - 00;10;32;07

Jordan Estrada

Exactly. So when that individual is contemplating committing a mass shooting and having doubts and kind of going onto the internet to re inspire themselves, we want them to find us is is really where we, where we position ourselves.

00;10;32;07 - 00;10;58;24

Stephen Gutowski

So sort of like, you're just you're talking about, you know, mental health interventions for people who are for contemplating suicide or, or, having gambling addiction or other, you know, alcoholism or something. Does you see a lot, for instance, almost any media now where suicide is depicted, they will show you, at the end or somewhere in there, a way to reach out to the suicide hotline, right?

00;10;59;00 - 00;11;05;15

Stephen Gutowski

Yeah. Or some sort of resource for somebody who may be having, suicidal ideation.

00;11;05;15 - 00;11;06;01

Jordan Estrada

100%.

00;11;06;07 - 00;11;36;12

Stephen Gutowski

Strengthened by, you know, watching the piece of content that that talks about suicide or just, you know, include suicide in some way. And, and you're saying that, or, you know, obviously gambling too, every gambling ad has a little thing that says if you're addicted to gambling, same through alcohol. You know, and so they're often times these discussions or, it also adds, of course, to that discussion that bring up these topics, have some sort of resource that's also presented alongside them.

00;11;36;14 - 00;11;49;00

Stephen Gutowski

And we don't have anything really like that we do or, you know, or if you Google, you know, I, can use ways of committing suicide. Google is going to put up, a.

00;11;49;02 - 00;11;55;25

Jordan Estrada

Media like, get tons of like probably the first 2 or 3 pages of Google resources. Yeah. But we don't have.

00;11;56;01 - 00;12;04;08

Stephen Gutowski

You we don't have that for somebody contemplating killing some, people, you know, carrying out a, act of mass violence.

00;12;04;10 - 00;12;13;24

Jordan Estrada

In contrast, a lot of the first results, the first page results for Google is exactly the type of thing that would incite or inspire an individual to go forward.

00;12;13;26 - 00;12;40;19

Stephen Gutowski

So you want to and there just really aren't a lot of those research, like there isn't a suicide hotline for somebody contemplating mass violence. Really. I mean, no, no, no, no, certainly there's, there's vast project talks about there's a kind of connection between suicide and mass violence. Oftentimes the mass an act of mass violence is a sort of suicide attempt, right, for the person who's carrying it out.

00;12;40;21 - 00;13;04;05

Stephen Gutowski

But, you know, that's not what the suicide hotline is set up to handle. And so you're what you're trying to do here, it sounds like to me, is create something like that. Yeah. Create the resource for somebody who's considering it because it's kind of a taboo thing, right? Do you, you know, creating a resource for, you know, somebody like the buffalo shooter who's like this racist, murderer, right?

00;13;04;10 - 00;13;21;25

Stephen Gutowski

To try and keep him from becoming that is, is not necessarily something that, you know, Coca-Cola is going to want to put an ad sponsorship on. Right. But but it's necessary that that's the idea here that this could actually help. This could actually, stop some of these attacks.

00;13;22;01 - 00;13;45;07

Jordan Estrada

Yeah, that's exactly right. And we've actually we, we have an our advocating for those same sorts of resources to be provided at the end of, you know, content talking about mass shootings. We do find that, like you said, there's a resistance. I and I think the resistance stems from the fact that people I think people want to think that, it takes a very unique individual, a very rare, unique individual to come to a mass shooting.

00;13;45;10 - 00;14;07;28

Jordan Estrada

Right. And that may have been true at one point. And and it can be it can be frightening to think that that's not true, but we actually see that, potentially it's a hopeful thing that there are lots of people who think about mass shootings but then decide not to go through with it. And, and as much as that happens, we can if it happens and we can replicate it and then we can figure out how to, you know, do it for the individuals who are more are more serious or committed.

00;14;08;00 - 00;14;33;10

Stephen Gutowski

Okay. And so so you, you, you read this research, you you consulted with these experts, who've studied this phenomenon and have, identified patterns and behavior that you think you can, disrupt and off ramp, those who are considering this and, you know, that these people are honestly more like a normal person, a regular person, than somebody who is just born evil and wants to to kill everybody.

00;14;33;16 - 00;15;03;09

Stephen Gutowski

It's like, that's not the reality of what these people are like. They're generally, going through a mental health crisis and they that can lead them to, such a horrific outcome. But, but it is one that can also be short circuited and stopped and has been like, it's this is not all theory. This is stuff that's happened when people have off ramps potential mass shooters in the and and and so, you know, at the end of that process you, you you, you read the last page, you consulted with a lot of different experts.

00;15;03;09 - 00;15;14;27

Stephen Gutowski

They give you advice. Well, how did you, what are the methods that you came to as, putting this into practice? How how does your program actually work?

00;15;14;29 - 00;15;40;08

Jordan Estrada

Yeah. So our initial thought was we wanted to focus on SEO, basically search engine optimization, so that when an individual, you know, types in something related to mass shootings, they would find our de-escalating content instead. And that is still something that is definitely a goal that we're still working for. That's an extremely competitive, field of just, you know, getting into that top, Google results for, for, something is as heavily researched as mass shooting.

00;15;40;11 - 00;15;59;09

Jordan Estrada

We don't necessarily have our young organization doesn't necessarily have to have the cloud or the pulse to really land in that space just yet. We are continuing to advocate that and, reach for that as an aspirational goal, because we would like to see, you know, like you mentioned, if you Google, anything related to suicide, you're going to immediately get Google results for help.

00;15;59;09 - 00;16;09;05

Jordan Estrada

And just just to make sure you're okay and provide you with resources. And we would like to see a similar, you know, front page Google response if somebody, searches for topics related to that.

00;16;09;07 - 00;16;10;15

Stephen Gutowski

You spoken with Google, by the way.

00;16;10;21 - 00;16;34;09

Jordan Estrada

Yeah, we have there's, there's there's, definitely a bureaucratic element, like a corporate bureaucratic element. There's the, the competing interests. You know, so many other people are competing for that same space to kind of, promote news stories or, independent and, unique research on mass shootings. So it's extremely competitive and it's not something that, yeah, it's going to take a lot.

00;16;34;10 - 00;16;45;15

Jordan Estrada

I think it's going to take a lot of advocacy and a lot of, success stories, you know, as we build on our success to kind of convince, the powers that be in the search engine world to, to kind of move in that direction.

00;16;45;17 - 00;17;02;19

Stephen Gutowski

Okay. But so you, one thing you want to do is, is when somebody, somebody's searching for, for, you know, term that indicates they might be considering mass shooting. You want to be able to have your resources come up. Let's say that happens. What? What are they going to find? What? You know, what are the resources look like.

00;17;02;21 - 00;17;23;22

Jordan Estrada

Yeah. So so that so that being said, we have to understand, you know, we've talked about hotlines. There's an extreme aversion within these subcultures, within these communities to actually, call the National Suicide Hotline or a parallel hotline for, for mass shooters. It's, you know, it's it's laughed at. People make a lot of memes mocking it.

00:17:23;24 - 00:17:39;24

Jordan Estrada

There's almost like it's almost seen as, like a, you know, a taboo within these subcultures to call hotline. That being said, there are many individuals who will call the hotline, and we see this within with even just the national suicide hotline. There's the people who make fun of it, but it's still functioning effectively to help a lot of people.

00:17:40;01 - 00:18:10;13

Jordan Estrada

So with our resources, when people come to our to our care websites, we call them, we kind of have to to equally, in my opinion, equally valuable resources on those care websites. And the first is for the people who are looking for help in connection. We have hotlines, we have, warm lines, which, if you're not familiar, it's kind of like a, it's a play on words because it's, it's it will get you help, but it's less likely to, like, trigger a, a law enforcement response or some sort of, you know, agency response if you call it warm line versus hotline.

00:18:10;13 - 00:18:46;08

Jordan Estrada

So we have all these options for people to reach out for help. We have, communities. They can they can connect with. But we also understand that, that a lot of people are, are not going to call a hotline or warm line or talk to anybody because they don't want to help themselves. So we also on our care websites, we build all these resources of like, media content, blog content, literature, specifically speaking to these individuals with the idea that if we get them on our care website, even if they're not going to call for help, they might still see something that's going to spark their, their, their off cramping process.

00:18:46;08 - 00:19:07;04

Jordan Estrada

And again, going back to that quote from the Buffalo shooter, he hit websites that inspired him and escalated him. We want to get those people to hit our website, which will calm people down, de-escalate them and give them, you know, hopefully hope for recovery, even if they're not going to actually call a hotline and, seek counseling, like we we have to deal with that.

00:19:07;07 - 00:19:13;29

Jordan Estrada

Like a lot of these people are not going to actually seek help. But we can still help them with it, even if they're not going to actively seek help.

00:19:14;01 - 00:19:35;07

Stephen Gutowski

Right. And so if they land on your website and they, they get to these resources, what what are the kinds of like how are you off ramping them? What are the kinds of things messages you're sending. What how what have you seen as, as, you know, going through all this research, what is it that, the strategies you've landed on for trying to convince somebody not to carry out an attack like this?

00:19:35;10 - 00:19:56;26

Jordan Estrada

Yeah. A big thing is enlisting the help of, what's called within the industry formers, people who were formerly had, mass shooter ideation and then, you know, pursued a path to recovery. We have a number of formers that we work with, the most, prominent, which you probably are familiar with, Aaron Stark, who is the author of the Ted talk about how he was almost a mass shooter.

00:19:56;29 - 00:20;15;05

Jordan Estrada

So he's been very instrumental in kind of guiding our content. And we kind of use these these voices of people who are in this space to kind of share the stories of, you know, this is what I was going through. This is why I was contemplating violence. Here's why. I, you know, decided not to do it and how it's positively impacted my life.

00:20;15;07 - 00:20;34;28

Jordan Estrada

So we share a lot of, former content for formers. We also talk a lot about subjects that are of interest to individuals within the subcultures, like we talk a lot about, you know, philosophy, like philosophies of nihilism, dystopian, like the dystopian feelings that people have about our society in general. We talk about specific things like holiday depression.

00:20;35;01 - 00:21;06;07

Jordan Estrada

We talk about, specific subcultures. So they'll be like specific subcultures around a video game that's very popular within, within the kind of depressed internet user community. We'll talk about, you know, the valuable things you can learn from that video game and how, you know, you can use it to learn things about yourself. So, so basically, it's just building this library of very relatable content that's relatable to these subcultures and, helps them feel seen, helps them, feel inspired and hopefully gets them on this even if you.

00:21;06;08 - 00:21;24;27

Jordan Estrada

Yeah, you know, a lot of studies show even if you can distract a person for a couple minutes in that moment when they're having, you know, their peak suicidal ideation, you know, that could potentially save their life. And it's all about, like, capturing, capturing their attention in that moment. And if I could share a little more, one of the, one of the.

00:21;25;02 - 00:21;52;02

Jordan Estrada

So we talked earlier, SEO is the goal, but in the, in the interim, we run outreach outreach campaigns on social media where we're, kind of reaching out to these subcultures, kind of putting out a message of hope to them. And we see we I'm very happy with, you know, every time we, we get someone to our care website, it's basically we're reaching people in kind of that, like brain rot space on social media where they're just like in this infinite doom scroll, all consuming content that may not be helpful.

00:21;52;04 - 00:22;13;22

Jordan Estrada

And we're actually able to get people to leave that brain rot internet scroll and come to our care website where they where they can be exposed to all this helpful content and the options for connections as well. So just that fact that we're able to get people to leave that kind of like depressed internet brain rot to come to our care websites is, to me, you know, anytime that happens, it's a moment that somebody is potentially being helped.

00:22;13;24 - 00:22;45;15

Stephen Gutowski

Right? Because, you know, as you alluded to with the Buffalo shooter or, as anyone who's, you know, researched this topic or suicide, ideation generally, knows that this is not something that is necessarily an all, all at once thing where somebody is, is, it's a downward spiral. And then usually they'll, you know, they'll go into lows and come back up and go on to lows and come back up and, and then eventually you get to, the A level that they can't get out of.

00:22;45;15 - 00:23;11;01

Stephen Gutowski

Yeah, I guess is the idea. And so if you can interrupt that, well, with, with a resource that they can relate to, that is speaking, you know, their language is referencing the things that they talk about in their, in the subcultures that you're describing. Yeah. But in a different perspective that that takes somebody out of this, the spiral, you know, that can that can save them really.

00:23;11;03 - 00:23;35;19

Stephen Gutowski

And any of the any, you know, anyone else that they might harm? Yeah. So that's interesting. That is a pretty, fascinating thing to see. Put into practice. So thank you. Do you have some, some numbers on this? What? You know what? How long have you guys been operating? Now, obviously, you just got your five and 1C3, designation.

00:23;35;19 - 00:23;55;19

Stephen Gutowski

I looked it up on the IRS website myself. It is legitimate. You think you guys are an operating, nonprofit now? Donations are tax deductible to five and one c threes. But, you know, brand new. You just really started all this, but not today. So you've been around a little while, and you've been able to implement some of these programs.

00:23;55;19 - 00:23;57;01

Stephen Gutowski

And what are you seeing so far.

00:23;57;03 - 00:24;23;03

Jordan Estrada

Yeah. So again, we started in 2022. Our first year was basically just research understanding, you know, learning, trying to like position ourselves to to have something to offer. We went operational in 2023, second half of 2023. We began these, social media outreach campaigns, more of a kind of like a test pilot program to kind of test workability, see if we could get people to our care websites and then click through to counseling after that.

00:24;23;05 - 00:24;50;02

Jordan Estrada

And based on that, we, we, went more, I would say fully operational in 2024. We ran outreach campaigns for 136 days in 2024. During those outreach campaigns, we reached, about 260,000 individuals within at risk populations on social media. We were able to get 21,000 of those individuals to our care websites, and then 136 of those individuals went ahead and click through to, counseling resources.

00:24;50;05 - 00:25;16;17

Jordan Estrada

So that's and that's just from 136 days running those campaigns. So we're very happy with that. Again. It's a, we're reaching a very niche demographic. If this was a marketing campaign, if I was trying to sell a product, this conversion, this conversion rate would be, you know, not workable, but because we're trying to reach this, a small subset of the population, when we see small numbers like that, you know, it's a very small minority of individuals who would actually who actually carry out these attacks.

00:25;16;21 - 00:25;25;05

Jordan Estrada

So we are looking for a very kind of bespoke, small, almost like conversion, which is there.

00:25;25;08 - 00:25;46;08

Stephen Gutowski

Which is the difficulty of it. Right? Yeah. I mean, there's only, you know, these, these attacks get a lot of attention because they're, they're spectacles and they're designed to get a lot of attention. And they fit kind of, you know, unfortunately, in a very specific niche for media coverage as well. But, you know, they're really.

00:25;46;12 - 00:26;07;25

Stephen Gutowski

Yeah. The violence Project count. There's only 7 or 8 of these that happen a year. So I only have seven perpetrators that at least as far as carrying out successful, mass shooting attack, they don't count necessarily the, you know, the other acts of mass violence, but but, you know, they're it's not a huge number of people that are even attempting these.

00;26;07;25 - 00;26;32;03

Stephen Gutowski

I mean, if you look at the FBI active shooter, count, which which includes a lot of incidents where the person didn't successfully harm anyone else. It's still not a big number of people, especially in a country as large as the United States. Yeah. And presumably this also has an impact, around the world, right, that your content is available to anyone, anywhere for sure.

00;26;32;03 - 00;26;47;04

Jordan Estrada

Yeah. We're we're currently only. So we run the average campaigns targeting the United States. But we see, like, if the content gets spread organically, we see, you know, interactions in other countries. And eventually as we grow, we'd like to, you know, offer the same sort of campaign globally.

00;26;47;07 - 00;27;12;29

Stephen Gutowski

Sure. But you're, you're you're trying to zoom in on a very small population that's not necessarily trying to, interact with you. You know, that's not their goal. When they log into these websites, they're having these, these sorts of thoughts. And so, you know, it's it's, that's a tall task, but it's, it sounds like you're having some success so far, with this and reaching this, this demographic.

00;27;12;29 - 00;27;36;21

Stephen Gutowski

And you mentioned counseling here. You know, obviously, one of the hallmarks of a lot of these, people who are susceptible this, this sort of mindset, this, this mental health spiral, are people who who are abused themselves in some way, especially as children. Is that part of the like when you when you refer someone to counseling, how what does that process look like?

00;27;36;25 - 00;27;48;28

Stephen Gutowski

Do they you do you get them to, you know, people like actual counselors, other organizations that that are that specialize in the sort of, trauma that they've experienced. How does that work?

00;27;49;00 - 00;28;07;29

Jordan Estrada

Yeah. And like you said, that's huge. If you look at the, the kind of the pathway that the Violence Project outlined, the very first kind of step is a, a critical childhood moment of some sort of abuse or harm. So we are partnered with a great organization. It's called Death to Life. They run a 24 over seven, crisis response line.

00;28;08;02 - 00;28;29;15

Jordan Estrada

They have a number of counseling options available. So we partner with them. They're our sister organization. And we if an individual comes to our care website and wants to, like, pursue that, they're the organization that we partner with and from. And it's kind of a seamless hand. It's a seamless transition to hand off to them. You know, it it we're we're almost operating as a single entity from a, from a user from a UI perspective.

00;28;29;22 - 00;28;47;20

Jordan Estrada

And, so, yeah. So they have that option. I should, I should mention here that one of the things that sets our organization apart from probably other people who have, thought about doing this or kind of like the, the, the federal programs doing this is that we don't engage in any surveillance on the people we're trying to reach.

00;28;47;25 - 00;29;05;13

Jordan Estrada

And the best way I could describe it is that, you know, there's there's a lot of efforts to try to, like, find the next mass shooter. We're not trying to find anyone. We're trying to get them to find us. And it's almost like we we we locate the dark. Kind of like the dark corners of the internet, the bad neighborhoods of town on like, fortune or Reddit or Instagram.

00;29;05;13 - 00;29;23;26

Jordan Estrada

And then we put up a billboard in those dark, those dark places in town and try to attract them to come to us. So we see as people interact with that content, but we don't necessarily. And, and neither do we want to specifically, you know, find out about those individuals because we want people to feel comfortable interacting with our content.

00;29;23;26 - 00;29;45;06

Jordan Estrada

We don't want them to feel surveilled, and neither do we want to, you know, leverage any sort of dystopian or, totalitarian, oh, you know, some sort of shelter solution where we're, you know, engaging in like, like people have brought up the subject of, like, Minority Report Pre-crime that's always something you have to be careful of. And the way we thread that needle is that, we don't we don't search for people or find them.

00;29;45;10 - 00;30;01;24

Jordan Estrada

We get them to find us. And we see that when they interact with our content. But we may not necessarily know, you know, what happens to them, afterwards, you know, we can do our part. And then, you know, it's a it's definitely a multi-tiered approach to, on this, whatever the individual is like on their pathway to recovery.

00;30;02;00 - 00;30;03;26

Jordan Estrada

00;30;03;29 - 00;30;33;18

Stephen Gutowski

Right. Because that's, that's one barrier for reaching somebody who's going through the this, mental health spiral is that they may they don't want to be known. They're considering something, you know, obviously illegal, but also just that, most people would consider, you know, horrendous and morally reprehensible. So they don't necessarily want to be they want to be an anonymized, correct, internet spaces a lot of the time now, not every time, you know, like I said, there's leakage.

00;30;33;18 - 00;30;58;15

Stephen Gutowski

That and often, often we could just happens to people they know in some way. Not not necessarily. Not always online. But, you know, it is so that's a key thing too, I would imagine, is like trying to assure these people it's for these folks who might want to, might be open to reading what you, you know, the resources that you have that they're not going to be immediately turned over to the police or what have you.

00;30;58;15 - 00;31;05;19

Stephen Gutowski

Correct. So you're kind of making it, more of a, you know, making it more likely that they might actually.

00;31;05;21 - 00;31;29;06

Jordan Estrada

Yeah, exactly. Yeah. That's that's the best way to give people confidence that it's not a surveillance app is just to not like, we don't have any ability to surveil the people who are interacting with their content. And I think that gives them a lot more, confidence, you know, to interact with their content and know that it's not going to, you know, put them on a list or get them in danger because we are dealing like, like again, like we are very much upstream.

00:31;29;12 - 00:31;47;08

Jordan Estrada

We're dealing with like, I talk about potential perpetrators and then I talk about at risk individuals, potential perpetrators. That's what gets all the publicity. That's the people who have a plan who are thinking about it. But where even upstream of that which what I call which with what I call the risk people who are people who are at risk of thinking about mass shootings.

00:31;47;12 - 00:32;05;04

Jordan Estrada

And we definitely don't want to, like, get those people on on lists or make them feel targeted in any way because they haven't done anything. They're just in danger of having thoughts. And we want to, you know, help them at that stage when it's it's very much, you know, about, helping them, not, enforcing against them.

00:32;05;06 - 00:32;34;17

Stephen Gutowski

Right. And so, can you give us any, you know, specific examples of, you know, within reason, obviously, like you said, you don't you're not trying to, you know, publicly name people that you've helped or anything like that, but, you know, it's been a little while now. You've had some of the, these programs running. How do you have, some specific examples of, of, people that you've been able to help or, you know, what are some of the ones that stick out in your mind?

00:32;34;19 - 00:33;00;14

Jordan Estrada

Sure. Yeah. And another, one of the things that we're expanding into that kind of directly answers your question is the role that bystanders, have in, preventing mass shootings. So we we're running these campaigns. We're putting up this material multiple times. We've been contacted by a concerned family member or concerned, you know, facility member being like, hey, I see your content.

00:33;00;16 - 00:33;17;16

Jordan Estrada

I see what you guys are doing. Like, I actually have concerns about this, this family member or this individual at my school. So in 2024, we assisted in six of these situations where somebody reached out to us with a specific, threat, whether it was a family member or in one case, it was a school had received a direct threat.

00:33;17;20 - 00:33;40;23

Jordan Estrada

In two cases, it was schools that were just received direct threats. One was that, they had stated, on this day in October, you know, everything's going to go down. That's a, that sort of thing. So we were able to help in those six, six situations because we've built up this, kind of body of knowledge, this institutional knowledge about how to interact and deal with a, with a, with a potential perpetrator.

00:33;40;26 - 00:34;06;01

Jordan Estrada

So, so how it looks in that situation is that, like using the example of the family member, somebody reached out to us and they were like, hey, I have this person in my family. They I've been reading your material. They exactly fit what you're talking about, you know, what do I do? So we were able to coach that person to come alongside them, provide them with resources not just of, like, typically in that situation, the resources are all about, you know, how to report them, how to, you know, how to contact the FBI.

00:34;06;03 - 00:34;24;28

Jordan Estrada

We have those resources as well. You know, it's very importantly, we never want, something, if if there's a if there's an immediate threat to life and safety, we definitely want to capture that information. But we also provide resources about how to talk to somebody who is having thoughts of, mass violence. You know, what you can do is their friend, like, how you can share and connect with them.

00:34:25;00 - 00:34:42;10

Jordan Estrada

And so we come alongside bystanders and provide those resources. And that's really been another way. You know, direct outreach is important. But reaching out to the friends and family members, potential perpetrators is, crucial when you consider, you know, the fact that you said that that leakage exists in so many cases, there are.

00:34:42;10 - 00:35:09;25

Stephen Gutowski

People there's a lot of signs to. Yeah, they're opportunistic behavior for sure. Yeah. Stockpiling firearms when they weren't into collecting guns before. Yeah. You know, references to other shootings and, in the past in a positive like any of these sort of things, there's, there's signs that people can look to, in addition to, maybe the, the potential, the person going through the spiral openly saying that they want to do this.

00:35:10;00 - 00:35:12;11

Stephen Gutowski

There are other things people can notice as well, too.

00:35:12;11 - 00:35:34;13

Jordan Estrada

It definitely seems like it's never a surprise to the people around the individual. So, one of the ways we're expanding and one of the programs where we're deploying is to kind of reach out, to the broad population with just tools and resources, like if, you know somebody who's either a potential perpetrator or who is at risk of having these thoughts, like, here are ways that you can help them, and also you have them yourself.

00:35:34;13 - 00:35:42;20

Stephen Gutowski

You've had people actually reach out to you, and you've been able to walk them through that process already, even in this early stage of the project.

00:35:42;26 - 00:36:05;27

Jordan Estrada

Yes, because we, you know, we've been putting out these programs broadly, both the direct outreach and also raising awareness about the need, to to fill the gap in this, this our national mental mental health response. And it's generated a lot of, a lot of positive feedback and, and like, I like you said, like we were just talking about in some cases, people have directly asked us to help in, in specific threats.

00:36:06;00 - 00:36:31;22

Stephen Gutowski

Well, okay. So let's talk a little bit about the structure of the organization here on this. But as we you know, wrap things up a little bit, you just got this 501 C3 designation. What what's the size of your, your group at this point? You know what, what's the funding level? You know, you don't have a 990 yet because you just formed as a nonprofit, but, you will be filing one soon.

00:36:31;22 - 00:36:35;16

Stephen Gutowski

And, you know, just what are the details of the organization itself?

00:36:35;22 - 00:36:56;05

Jordan Estrada

Sure. Yeah. So for the first, when we first started back in 2022, for the first kind of two years from, I think it was June of 20, 22 to, like July of, of this past year, we operated as a, a subsidiary of a parent nonprofit. That kind of incubates nonprofit. So we kind of operated under their umbrella.

00:36:56:07 - 00:37:16:25

Jordan Estrada

Then in July of this year, we kind of began the process of launching off on our own, and culminating in getting our 501 C3 status at the end of this year. We we don't have any, nine 90s yet because of that brand new nonprofit status, we will be filing, 2024 990, which will kind of cover that, you know, basically the last few weeks of,

00:37:16:27 - 00:37:26:18

Stephen Gutowski

Just for for people who don't know, the 990 is the the report to the IRS about your your financial, transactions. And that'll be made public when it's far.

00:37:26:20 - 00:37:50:02

Jordan Estrada

Yeah. But yeah, as far as organizational structure, we're still very small. We we, rely very heavily on volunteer and contract work. I try to keep everything, you know, keep the administrative costs low, keep the overhead very low. So that's something I'm very committed to. We have we have a team of about six and six people on the team, most of them, part time or contractors.

00:37:50:10 - 00:38:07:03

Jordan Estrada

And, it's. I'm very thankful for with how much we've been able to do, just with that, just with that small team and with a relatively small budget. And it just, you know, makes me think if as we grow, as we have, as we have more, I can't imagine how much more of an impact we'll be able to make.

00:38:07:05 - 00:38:13:26

Stephen Gutowski

And speaking of which, how can people get involved if they want, like, they can donate to you, but they can also volunteer.

00:38:13:28 - 00:38:33:17

Jordan Estrada

Yeah. So we we we are always looking to connect with people kind of on three levels. Obviously as a nonprofit, we we rely on donors. So we, we, we greatly appreciate that. But we also rely very heavily on volunteers. We have a number of, volunteers, some of them formers who kind of create the content, that we use to reach out to, potential perpetrators.

00:38:33:19 - 00:38:52:24

Jordan Estrada

So always helpful, if always great to interact with volunteers who either have skills in, like blogging, content creation, you know, Instagram videos, creating even even stuff like, TikTok videos, like all that is very helpful because that's how we reach we use all the all, every medium possible to reach these individuals. So always connecting with volunteers.

00:38:52:29 - 00:39:13:08

Jordan Estrada

And then we also look to connect with people who want to, you know, we offer, consultation and education to individuals who kind of want to learn, you know, what to do if a family member or a or a student in your organization is, you know, how to identify those at risk populations and then how to reach them, you know, way upstream of when actual threats are making are being made.

00:39:13:08 - 00:39:21:15

Jordan Estrada

We offer education and consultation on that and are happy to connect with individuals who kind of want to build that into their overall, mass shooting prevention strategy.

00:39:21:17 - 00:39:23:06

Stephen Gutowski
So for like schools or.

00:39:23:10 - 00:39:24:07
Jordan Estrada
Schools, churches.

00:39:24:07 - 00:39:25:00
Stephen Gutowski
Companies.

00:39:25:02 - 00:39:40:28
Jordan Estrada
Yeah, companies and even just, even even just, family members, you know, it's something like everybody has a role to play in, in this. And we want to equip people with the tools we've amassed from, you know, our all of our research and, and, experience reaching out to these individuals.

00:39:41:00 - 00:39:45:05
Stephen Gutowski
So if people want to donate or volunteer or get connected with you, where can they do that?

00:39:45:08 - 00:39:59:07
Jordan Estrada
Yep. They can go to, letstalktothem.org, our website. And we have information there if you want to volunteer, if you have, you know, ideas for us. And of course, if you want to donate or get involved, we have resources that letstalktothem.org.

00:39:59:10 - 00:40:17:29
Stephen Gutowski
All right. Wonderful. Well, look thank you so much for for coming on the show and for, for sharing, the details about your new program. You know, personally, I think it's, exciting to see somebody take some of this research that I think is is really good and valuable, and put it into practice in, in an organized way.

00:40:18:05 - 00:40:39:00
Stephen Gutowski
Thank you. Because it's not something I've seen a lot of to this point. And I do think it's something that, could make a real difference. You know, it's it's one of those things, I suppose, where, you don't always know. Right? How much of an impact it's having because you're preventing the bad things from happening instead of responding to them.

00:40:39:02 - 00:41:05:07
Stephen Gutowski
But I think, it's the most, intriguing effort I've seen. You know, usually we're focusing on very different, answers to to the mass shooting or mass violence problem or self-starting terrorists. But, you know, all this stuff, there seem to be a lot of connections, in the lead up to the events from, in these perpetrators lives that are interruptible.

00:41:05:11 - 00:41:21:15
Stephen Gutowski
Right? There's patterns that that come up like time and again. And there are techniques to, to try and, offramp people. And it's, it sounds like that's, you know, what you guys are trying to implement. And I think that's a huge, huge deal, honestly.

00:41:21:21 - 00:41:23:15
Jordan Estrada
Thank you. I appreciate that.

00:41:23;17 - 00:41:50;25

Stephen Gutowski

And I hope that, you know, people do go and connect and, and that you get more resources to work with, because, you know, and, you know, we'll we'll obviously track your progress and see how you're doing. And we will have to have you back on the show. Absolutely. Down the line to to do an update and, and to see how things are working and presumably you'll, you'll be, to fine tuning things as, as you go along reading more research?

00:41:51;01 - 00:41:52;29

Stephen Gutowski

Yeah. Learning from your experiences.

00:41:53;01 - 00:42:23;04

Jordan Estrada

Pretty much every week we iterate our campaigns based on, you know, what we what we've seen in the previous week. But it's definitely, definitely a learning and growing experience. And I appreciate, you know, what you said, that I couldn't say it better myself. You know, this is this is, I think something that's very, necessary as somebody who's worked in the National security industry, you know, the whole and just the whole security industry kind of struggles with that metrical problem of, you know, how do you prove your value when you're right, when your metric, when your main metric is that nothing happened?

00:42:23;07 - 00:42:40;10

Jordan Estrada

But I think, what excites me about this is that we can we definitely see as people are, as we're putting out this content, as people are interacting with it, we see almost daily feedback of how, you know, these, these adverse subcultures are engaging with our content and we find we fine tune off that, that, that feedback.

00:42:40;13 - 00:42:46;07

Jordan Estrada

But it also shows us that, that we're, we're exactly in the right neighborhoods, you know, sending out the right message.

00:42:46;09 - 00:43:14;02

Stephen Gutowski

Yeah. Not not an easy job, but one that's vital, I think. Yeah. Thank you. And, and I appreciate, that, that you guys are out there just, trying, trying to have an impact in this area because, I think it's it's one of the things that may help us, you know, get through this period that we've had the last 20, 25 years of, you know, these sorts of mass violence attacks.

00:43:14;06 - 00:43:35;20

Stephen Gutowski

You know, we may never get to, zero point, but, I think we can do a lot better than we have. And and this is this is an area where I, where I see, you know, backed by a lot of real world research, potential for bringing bring down those levels. And, and I think that's what everybody wants to see.

00:43:35;23 - 00:43:55;22

Stephen Gutowski

So, look, yeah, like I said, I appreciate you coming on. I think people should go out and check out, let's talk to them.org and, and, you know, see if they're able to help in some way. But we'll have to have you back on in the future. Appreciate again for, you know, you taking some time to, to discuss this with us and and I wish you luck.

00:43:55;24 - 00:43:59;04

Jordan Estrada

Thank you. Stephen, I appreciate you having me. And I will be in touch.

00:43:59;07 - 00:44:03;27

Stephen Gutowski

All right. That's all we've got for you guys this week. We will be back again real soon.