

Opinion

Another Viewpoint



Should kids fight back in schools?

Would you bring a Sharpie to a gun fight? Sounds ridiculous, right? So, the thought of a group of kiddie commandos storming an armed school intruder like a posse of miniature Texas Rangers is chilling.

But a suburban Fort Worth school district seems to be willing to gamble that the kids' odds of survival would be better if they would swat an intruder with their text books, jab him with a pencil or whomp him with their backpacks.

"Getting under desks and praying for rescue from professionals is not a recipe for success," said Robin Browne, a major in the British Army and an instructor for Response Options, the company providing training for the Burleson schools.

Instead, he says, they should fight back, "picking up anything and everything and throwing it at the head and body of the attacker."

That sounds like a recipe for disaster. Even the puniest intruder becomes a formidable force when he's toting a semiautomatic weapon.

... But what's likely to happen if a roomful of kicking, screaming kids rushes him? Probably, he'll open fire and mow down the first wave.

A better solution lies in hiring additional security personnel, installing more surveillance cameras, X-raying backpacks and securing the schoolhouse and classroom doors so children could get out if they need to escape a dangerous situation, but intruders can't get in.

Similarly, arming teachers as defenders during a schoolhouse attack isn't a good idea. Bringing more weapons into an already volatile situation rarely is.

... The fact that we are even discussing this matter is a sad testament to the scary, ugly times we live in. No doubt, murderous rampages at schools from Florida to Oregon, Pennsylvania to Colorado, and even threatening incidents in Kansas and Missouri make us wonder what we can do to keep our kids safe.

But teaching a bunch of kids to take on an armed intruder seems like way too big a gamble.

— Topeka Capital-Journal

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Where to write, call

- U.S. Sen. Pat Roberts**, 109 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510. 202/224-4774
- U.S. Sen. Sam Brownback**, 303 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510. 202/224-6521
- U.S. Rep. Jerry Moran**, 2443 Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20515. 202/225-2715 or Fax 202/225-5124
- State Rep. Jim Morrison**, State Capitol Building, 303 SW 10th St. Rm. 171-W, Topeka 66612. 785/296-7676 e mail: jmorrison@ink.org web: www.ink.org/public/legislators/jmorrison
- State Sen. Ralph Ostmeyer**, State Capitol, 300 SW 10th St., Rm. 128-S., Topeka, Kan. 66612, 785/296-7399 ostmeyer@senate.state.ks.us

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John Van Nostrand - Publisher
jvannostrand@nwkansas.com

NEWS

Patty Decker - Editor
pdecker@nwkansas.com

Tisha Cox - General Assignment
tcx@nwkansas.com

Jan Katz Ackerman, Area Reporter
ackermanjk@ruraltel.net

ADVERTISING

Crystal Rucker - Advertising Sales/Director
crystalr@nwkansas.com

Jasmine Crottinger - Advertising Sales
jasminec@nwkansas.com

Joe Hayes - Advertising Sales
jhayes@nwkansas.com

BUSINESS OFFICE

Lea Bandy - Circulation Manager
lea@nwkansas.com

Jeanette Applegate - Bookkeeping & Ad Building
japplegate@nwkansas.com

Evan Barnum - Systems Administrator
support@nwkansas.com

NOR'WEST PRESS

Jim Bowker - General Manager

Richard Westfahl, Lana Westfahl, Judy McKnight

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HIP-WADING TO ELECTION DAY

Motherhood — it's a tough job

In the next few days, a dear friend of mine will be having a baby and, for her, it's a first.

Now that she will be joining the ranks of motherhood, I thought it would be appropriate to clue her in on what her new job will be like.

So for my friend, Michelle, and all the other young mothers, here is that job description.

The job of motherhood is the most rewarding experience possible, but also the toughest, since children don't come with instruction manuals.

For those willing to accept this position, here is what's required.

- Long-term team players needed for challenging permanent work in an often chaotic environment.
- Candidates must possess excellent communication and organizational skills and be willing to work variable hours, which will include evenings and weekends and frequent 24 hour shifts on call.
- Some overnight travel required, including trips to primitive camping sites on rainy weekends and endless sports tournaments in faraway cities.
- Travel expenses not reimbursed. Extensive courier duties also required.

Responsibilities

- For the rest of your life.
- Must be willing to be disliked at least temporarily, until someone needs \$5 to go skating.
- Must be willing to bite tongue repeatedly.
- Also, must possess the physical stamina of a pack of mules and be able to go from zero to 60



Patty Decker

• Deep Thoughts

mph in three seconds flat in case, this time, the screams from the backyard are not someone just crying wolf.

- Must be willing to face stimulating technical challenges, such as small gadget repair, mysteriously sluggish toilets and stuck zippers.
- Must screen phone calls, maintain calendars and coordinate production of multiple home-work projects.
- Must have ability to plan and organize social gatherings for clients of all ages and mental outlooks.
- Must be willing to be indispensable one minute, an embarrassment the next.
- Must handle assembly and product safety testing of a half million cheap, plastic toys and battery operated devices.
- Must always hope for the best but be prepared for the worst.
- Must assume final, complete accountability for the quality of the end product.
- Responsibilities also include floor maintenance and janitorial work throughout the facility.

Possibility for advancement, promotion

• Virtually none. Your job is to remain in the same position for years, without complaining, constantly retraining and updating your skills, so that those in your charge can ultimately surpass you.

Previous experience

• None required, unfortunately. On-the-job training offered on a continually exhausting basis.

Wages and compensation

• You pay them, offering frequent raises and bonuses. A balloon payment is due when they turn 18 because of the assumption that college will help them become financially independent. When you die, you give them whatever is left.
• The oddest thing about this reverse-salary scheme is that you actually enjoy it and wish you could only do more.

Benefits

• While no health or dental insurance, no pension, no tuition reimbursement, no paid holidays and no stock options are offered, job supplies limitless opportunities for personal growth and free hugs for life if you play your cards right.
Even though much of the description was lighthearted, moms do have tough jobs and it's good every now and then to remind others how much they are appreciated.

Decker is editor the Free Press. Her column appears on Fridays

Common sense working

Crop and livestock producers take pride in their profession and the fact that they help feed the world. They also enjoy coming together with family, friends and at meetings to enjoy the fruits of their labor and eating.

Farmers and ranchers aren't alone in this tradition of breaking bread. A recent nationwide survey reveals people value the joy and pleasure that results from eating. Food is deeply entrenched in family values.

Without question, emotions are also tied with what we're eating for lunch or dinner. Emotional connections to our food sometimes make potential risks within our food supply appear frightening.

How people look at risks provides a clear understanding of why consumers react so strongly to food safety issues.

People often perceive unfamiliar things as risky if they can't control the outcome, if their exposure is involuntary, if the effects are irreversible and if it's caused by human actions or failures.

Food-borne illnesses are an example of the results of actions uncontrollable and unforeseeable by the consumer.

Today, E. coli is a leading cause of food-borne illness. Seventy-three thousand cases of infection and 61 deaths occur in the United States each year, according to the Center for Disease Control (CDC).

Though most illness has been associated with eating undercooked, contaminated ground beef, people have also become ill while eating contaminated bean sprouts or fresh leafy vegetables such as lettuce and spinach.

The recent infections from fresh spinach

John Schlageck

• Insight

caused just such alarm among U.S. consumers. As of Oct. 6, 199 persons were infected with the outbreak strain of E. coli in 26 states, CDS says. Three deaths in confirmed cases have been associated with this outbreak.

Still, technology continues to make strides toward safeguarding this nation's consumers against E. coli infection. A practical, effective cattle-washing system that reduces levels of pathogens on cattle hides—lessening the likelihood that the pathogens will get onto the meat and be consumed by humans—has been developed by Agricultural Research Service scientists in Clay Center, Neb.

It is estimated that approximately 40 percent of the feedlot-raised beef cattle processed in the United States now undergo hide-on carcass washing treatment.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food Safety and Inspection Service reported that the incidence of E. coli positive ground beef samples collected fell by 43.3 percent after the beef industry began using the washing cabinets.

Like the food industry and our government, we also have an obligation to keep food safe. The way we handle, store and cook food can mean the difference between a satisfying meal and a bout with E. coli or salmonella.

Consumers can prevent E. coli infection by thoroughly cooking ground beef, avoiding unpasteurized milk, and by washing hands care-

fully before preparing or eating food. Fruits and vegetables should be washed well, but washing may not remove all contamination.

Purchasing, storing and preparing both food, especially traditional and new meat and poultry products, presents many challenges to consumers.

As a wise and safety-conscious shopper, it is our responsibility to keep food safe once it leaves our local grocery store or meat market.

When purchasing products labeled "keep refrigerated," do so only if they are stored in a refrigerated case and cold to the touch. Buy frozen products only if they are frozen solid. Never buy something that feels mushy.

Avoid cross contamination.

To prevent raw meat and poultry from contaminating foods that will be eaten without further cooking, enclose individual packages of raw meat or poultry in plastic bags. Position packages of raw meat or poultry in your shopping cart so their juices cannot drip on other food.

Always shop for perishables last. Keep refrigerated and frozen items together so they will remain cold.

Place perishables in the coolest part of your car during the trip home.

Pack them in an ice chest if the time from store to home refrigerator will be more than one hour.

While most of these tips sound simple, a common-sense approach the next time you shop and cook could ensure safer food for your family.

John Schlageck is the managing editor of "Kansas Living," a quarterly magazine dedicated to agriculture and rural life in Kansas.

Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley

