

Climb Under your desk

Community Comment: Mike Goldsby, October 8, 2015

When I was in elementary school in Grants Pass in the early 1960's, the whole class would climb under our desks to prepare for an atomic bomb attack. I remember looking out the classroom window at Redwood Elementary in Grants Pass Oregon. I knew Cuba was a long ways away. I figured Grants Pass would not be their first target, but I was concerned that we would have to deal with radioactive fallout and mutants and refugees from the bombed cities. Even as a third grader, I knew my desk would not protect me from an atomic blast.

Kids today don't have drills to prepare them for atomic bombs. Instead, in some schools, they have lockdown drills for campus shooters. Some schools in other states have gone too far, providing overly realistic drills that are terrifying. But all schools now have policies and procedures for lockdown situations, just in case.

New York Times Columnist Nicholas Kristof wrote an editorial claiming that guns kill more preschoolers than police officers. The Tampa Bay Times fact checked that and found his claim mostly true. In 2013, guns killed 26 police officers and 82 preschoolers. The officers were all killed in the line of duty. A majority of preschoolers were killed in the home by unintentional discharge or by another child. These statistics held true for five years, 2008 through 2013.

His comparison is intended to make the point that gun deaths need to be discussed. Kristof recommended small steps, like a 10 year ban on gun ownership for anyone convicted of assault or domestic violence.

After the most recent campus shooting in Roseburg Oregon, President Obama predicted that there will be a growing number of single issue voters focused on gun control, just as there are a number of single issue voters who focus solely on preventing any discussion of gun control.

In the meantime, what can we do about the number of people who will lose their lives to guns next month or next year?

Colleges are definitely working on earlier recognition and interventions for emotionally troubled students. College of the Redwoods for example has

invested in a Behavioral Intervention Team, a group that is visibly available to help students and faculty.

A larger number of gun deaths each year are due to unintentional discharge and, sadly, suicide. The state of Colorado embarked on a novel approach:

ManTherapy. Like many other western states, Colorado recognized that middle aged men are at higher risk of suicide, when compared to every other group. Colorado also recognized that men are highly unlikely to discuss their emotions or seek therapy.

ManTherapy.ORG is a humorous look at a serious problem. The website features fictional Doctor Rich Mahogany, a self-proclaimed man's man. Mahogany says there are certain things a man must never do, like skipping or referring to runs in baseball as "points." But he encourages men to talk to people they trust and seek help for things like depression or substance abuse. Colorado has seen an increase in men seeking help, directly related to Man Therapy.

Locally, another resource is the NCAMHP website: The North Coast Association of Mental Health Provider's website has a complete list of local counselors and therapists. You can look for counseling by location, counseling specialties or payment arrangements.

None of these situations improve unless we talk. Climbing under your desk won't help.

This is Mike Goldsby for Community Comment.