

From the Office of the Sheriff:

During the past two weeks the country has experienced at least four school shootings, with one in our own state. This of course brings a renewed sense of urgency to answer a few questions such as – How will we protect our children? There are many ideas and opinions of how to best respond to these situations. We even have one legislator recommending that we arm our teachers. I do not have the answers and would question anybody that say's they do. What I can offer are ideas on we can best ensure these situations do not hit closer to home.

First and foremost, the access to firearms by children is too convenient. Understanding that the average Wisconsin household contains 7 firearms, it is what we do to safeguard them that can make a difference. Firearms should be secured in a locked cabinet or gun safe when not in use. Homes that have small children should go the extra step and place gun locks on all firearms. This will prevent ready access during highly emotional times and access to those who may want to cause harm to others. Some may go yet another step and ensure ammunition is secured in a place separate from the firearms.

Parents should remember; it may not be your son or daughter that wants the firearm but their friend whom wants to borrow one. As parents we need to monitor our children so we are alerted to potential signs and symptoms of depression and anger. Children can provide these signs through everyday life. Signs include certain ways they dress, how they act, written notes, and internet sites visited. Today, we can't take a child's verbal threats lightly. We must attempt to validate the threat.

As I said, I may not have the right answer but I have thought long and hard on the wrong answers. I think the wrong answer is placing more firearms in our schools unless it is worn by someone trained in law enforcement. I watched Fox News this morning and saw a training video that encourages students to confront the gunman and throw text books at him. I am not sure I want my 6th grader going on the offensive! What I do see in the future are schools similar to secure facilities where each door is controlled by someone in a secure "control room" to ensure controlled access by all. Video surveillance is a great asset and our elected officials need to re-energize the funding for school liaison officers as well.

In Dodge County, law enforcement officers have been trained in the response to an "active-shooter." This training is conducted in a school building to ensure realism. The next step is to train the students and faculty on what they should do in these situations so they know what to expect when law enforcement arrives.

But then again, how huge of an issue is this? With 50 million students going to school each day, what % is killed by firearms while in school? I do not have the numbers but more than zero is unacceptable. Most student deaths occur getting on and off the school bus. School buses are the safest form of transportation, over 400,000 buses on the road each day, traveling over 4 billion miles per year. Yet, we loose 50 children each year to school bus accidents. Most deaths are as the children are pedestrians within 10 feet of the bus or in the "danger zone".

Before we over-react and propose legislation arming each and every teacher and custodian, lets identify the problems we have with school safety, all encompassing, not just school shootings.