

POTTSTOWN CITIZENS FOR Enlightened LEADERSHIP

It's a fact: Children are safer than ever

Santa Fe High School. Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School. Sandy Hook Elementary School.

Citizens may not know the name of their congressman, but they're well aware of school massacres, which have killed 35 people this year in Florida and Texas.

Of course, people are terrified and demand action. Last week, Gov. Wolf signed legislation providing \$60 million to improve safety and security on Pennsylvania school campuses.

But no matter how many laws we pass and policies we implement, it's impossible to spare children -- in school or anywhere else -- from every conceivable danger.

There are many nightmare scenarios. Consider Sandy Hook. The building was locked tight, but the intruder -- armed with a high-powered rifle -- simply shot out a glass panel next to the doors. So do we eliminate glass panels and windows?

Schools all across America routinely carry out "intruder" drills. But they won't help with another nightmare scenario: children shot at recess or waiting in bus line. Every day, millions of school children gather outdoors, making them sitting ducks for a psychopath with a gun. In fact, children playing in school yards were shot and killed in Jonesboro, Ark., in 1998, and Stockton, Calif., in 1989.

Let's consider another nightmare: a bomb. America's worst school massacre dates to 1927 in Michigan, when the treasurer of the local school

board secretly planted dynamite in the Bath Township Elementary School and detonated it with a timer, killing 38 children and two teachers. Other adults were killed outside by another bomb.

Yet all these horrific tragedies are rare -- extremely rare.



Commentary by
Tom Hylton

America's current public school population is about 50 million children and youth.

Since 1974, there have been 20 public school shootings in which at least two people were killed, for a total of 131 children and adults killed. During that same period, 45,667 children under the age of 14 were killed as passengers in car crash-

es.

Children and youth are hundreds of times more likely to be killed by a motorist who's driving drunk, or text messaging, or looking at a GPS screen, than they are by a mass murderer.

It may seem counter-intuitive, but school is the safest place a child can be.

According to the most recent federal data, between 1992 and 2015 less than three percent of homicides of children 5 to 18 occurred at school.

Here's another positive fact obscured by the headlines: It's never been safer to be a child.

The rate of death from all causes for children and youth has steadily declined for decades, to about a tenth of what it was in 1935.

That's right, a tenth!

Just since 1990, child mortality rates have fallen by nearly half. That's death from all causes; child homicide rates, specifically, are at record lows.

It's getting safer out there.



AH, THOSE INNOCENT DAYS OF YESTERYEAR! While intuition may tell us otherwise, children are much safer in school than anywhere else. Moreover, child mortality statistics show, it's never been safer to be a child.