

Involved parents a step to safe schools

Rooms of research papers, e-mail, and articles about recent school tragedies stack up. I think about my five children who attended Seaholm High School and of my oldest grandchild at New Trier in suburban Chicago. This is the first of two columns you may find helpful as you think about the Columbine tragedy.

A "New York Times" article, dated recently, "The Colorado school massacre has generated what amounts to a national conversation about causes and cures, raising issues as simple as school security, as delicate as parental responsibility, and as complex as the biological and cultural roots of teen-age violence. This discussion could well lead to a more alert and safe society. But there is one blindingly obvious issue that should be addressed right away — the issue of gun control. Congress, nervous about the gun lobby, is divided on the subject. The public, we suspect, is not divided at all — at least on the matter of keeping gun and explosives out of the hands of young people."

Please keep in mind the issue of gun control and the measures being proposed in Congress. Also, keep track of Michigan's legislature. John D. O'Hair, Wayne County prosecuting attorney, indicates that bills moving quickly throughout the Michigan legislature would allow just about everyone to carry a loaded handgun in public places. The bills are called "Shall Issue" bills and anyone over 21 (with no court-declared insanity or felony convictions) requesting a permit to carry a concealed loaded pistol in public "shall" have it. He says that the issue is an affront to common sense and responsible leadership.

What Does Health Education Offer?

My health curriculum writing included preparing lessons for children as young as eight about what to do when they encountered guns.

In the "Michigan Model," taught broad-



ALICE MCCARTHY

issue by educators.

Parents' first line of defense related to school violence is cooperation with the personnel in your school.

For example, the principal in the Pinconning, Mich. area schools immediately assured families of the safety of the children in their schools. His assurance includes:

- How access to the school building is made. That hall monitors are always in place.

- That individual, group, and family counseling services are available by calling the building principal.

- Peer mentoring that includes older students teaching younger children problem solving. That a peace-making program is in place for elementary students.

- That all students know how to use a hotline to report violent events.

- That local police and the schools are working together on a countrywide violence awareness and prevention committee.

- That the district has a crisis plan that can be enacted upon immediately.

Superintendent Charles E. Bebb and school board president in Pinconning include in their letter to parents this statement: "You can help your children cope with the trauma of violence by initiating conversations where they tell you their reactions to what they are seeing and feeling. Your tender touches, hugs,

ly in Michigan, and in "Health 101," the rule for third graders is: "Stop, Don't Touch, Leave the Area, and Tell an Adult." School health educators are working hard to keep your children safe. Comprehensive school health education includes lessons on violence, decision making, problem solving and making friends. Violence is considered a public health

■ **Contact professionals at your school if you find your son or daughter is sullen, depressed, getting poor grades, having trouble at home or with friends. That adolescent needs help. The typical adolescent is a pretty healthy, happy, purposeful person.**

and loving words are important too."

Yes, your first line of defense is the caring people at your children's schools. Contact professionals at your school if you find your son or daughter is sullen, depressed, getting poor grades, having trouble at home or with friends. That adolescent needs help. The typical adolescent is a pretty healthy, happy, purposeful person.

Engage yourself in your child's learning, school activities, and what is going on within the school system. Run for the school board, serve on the curriculum committee, attend sporting events, and join the parent support groups in your child's area of interest. Ask about training for teachers in identifying students in trouble. Learn exactly what services your school offers your family.

As a person who named her company "Bridge Communications, Inc." the bridge between family, school and community, I plead for parents to advocate on behalf of their adolescents by taking a swift walk across the bridge to their school.

Birmingham resident Alice R. McCarthy, Ph.D., is a nationally known parent educator, writer, and editor. She is the mother of five children and grandmother to eight children. To leave a message for McCarthy from a toll-free phone, call (313) 953-2047, mailbox 189, or write her at The Eccentric, 805 E. Maple, Birmingham, MI 48009.

McCarthy recognized for work in prevention field

The Michigan Prevention Association has named Alice R. McCarthy, Ph.D., the 1998 Preventionist of the Year.

In accepting the award, McCarthy, a Birmingham resident, said, "We are all winners because research consistently shows all segments of the community: the courts, the police, health professionals, social services, religious organizations and schools are working together under a prevention umbrella."

The award is presented at the conference, "Strengthening Children, Families and Communities," which emphasizes cooperation. McCarthy gives credit for her contributions to several health professionals in the Michigan Department of Community Health and Education.

In addition to her "Healthy Newsletters," published since 1999 and now reaching 1.4 million families, and revising "Healthy Teens," McCarthy has completed many publishing and research projects. "Skating Safe" was recently released by the Michigan Department of Community Health; in the works is a booklet she is helping produce to encourage the prevention of football injuries.

McCarthy's research concerns health and families. She has just completed work on two major surveys that question families about health education in schools. Between 1998-99, she completed a national health curriculum for children in grades K-6 and an extensive, critical, annotated family resource library bibliography.

"My life has revolved around

prevention since my early days as a young professional trained in early childhood and counseling at Cornell University, and later after receiving the Ph.D. from Wayne State University," she said. "I've always believed that families grow stronger when they have well-researched information. I publish based on the finest research I can find and I check and check. I try to write so families can understand research."

McCarthy is also a column writer for the Hometown Newspapers published by Suburban Communications Corp. based in Livonia.

McCarthy has served many organizations, most recently as chairperson of the Lake Superior State University Board of Regents and Chairperson of the Board of Directors at the Merrill-Palmer Institute, Wayne State University.

She has received many other state and national awards for her professional and community work, is listed in several "Who's Who" publications, and will be included in an international biography, "International Woman of the Year," in 1999-2000.

The Michigan Prevention Association is a voluntary organization of individuals and organizations working to make prevention a public policy priority through advocacy, professional development, networking, support, and fellowship. The organization may be reached by calling Cindy Agle at (517)318-0626.

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