

Do school resource officers offer a false sense of security?

This is never an easy topic to discuss, let alone write about. Recently, however, the chirping about town has been whether or not maintaining a police officer within our schools is offering staff, students and parents a false sense of security.

When a school resource officer is trained, they must undergo training beyond that of a regular patrolman, roughly 40 hours. A resource officer is defined as a 'a career law enforcement officer with sworn authority who is deployed by an employing police department or agency in a community-oriented policing assignment to work in collaboration with one or more schools.' As described by the National Association for School Resource Officers, the goal of an SRO is to provide a safe learning environment, provide valuable resources to staff, foster positive relationships with students, develop strategies to resolve problems affecting youth and to protect all students.

We decided to dig a bit deeper and get the skinny on what, if any the real value of having an SRO in our schools would have. A two-year study out of Carleton University in Canada revealed that for every dollar invested into the program, a return of \$11.13 of social and economic value was made.

In addition, the report found that having an SRO minimized or prevented property damage in schools. The presence of an SRO was also reported to have led to a decline in drug use at school as well as in fights and student injuries.

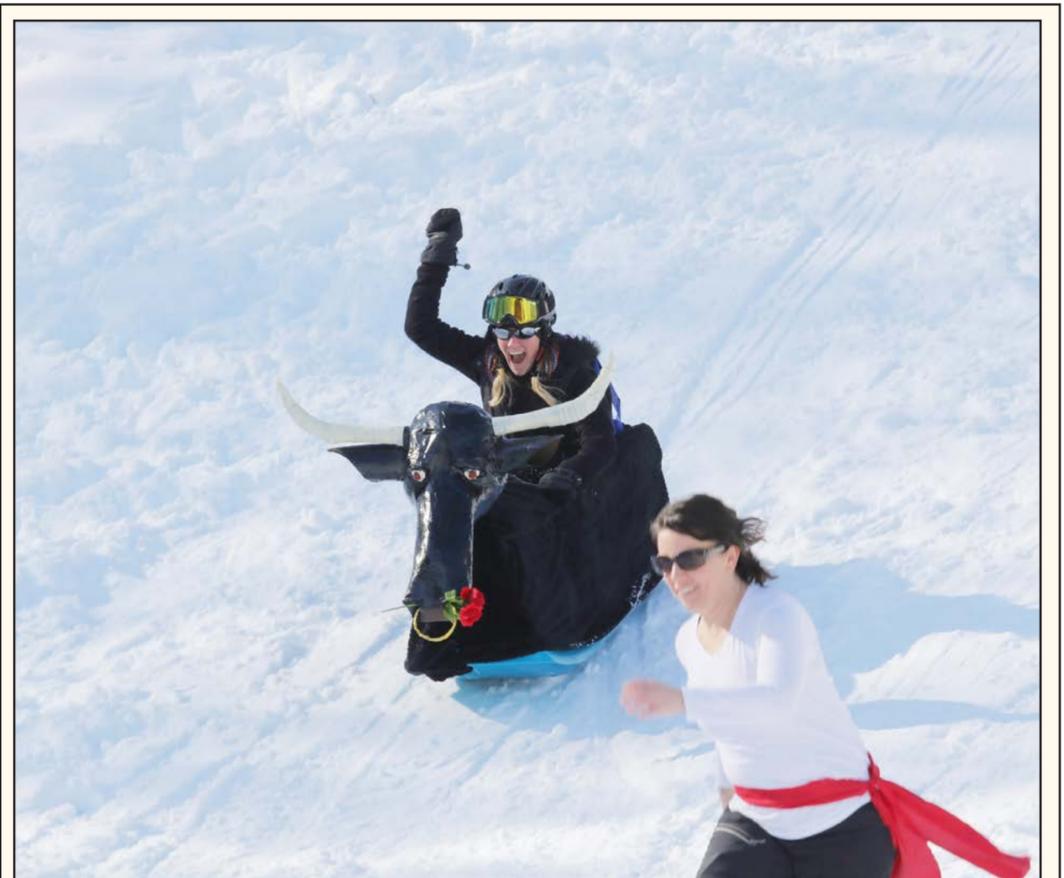
Students and staff did report an increased feeling of safety. SRO's have led to the decline of students who would have otherwise ended up with criminal records. The NASRO recommends that each school has an SRO, however they stress that said SRO must be carefully selected. The most beneficial scenario is to have one SRO per 1,000 students. Numbers those in the North Country need not worry about.

There are rare cases when an SRO takes things too far, for example if a student is arrested in school for doing something that typically would end them in detention, such as throwing food (yes this happened). In these cases, we say, let kids be kids and use discretion.

The question on whether or not having an officer is worth it, is usually in regards to avoiding an unfortunate situation. What we have found, is that while many SRO's will never have to thwart an attack, they do offer something above and beyond that of a typical school staff member. Most police officers are respected in their communities and many children regard them as heroes. As Mr. Rogers said, "In times of trouble, look for the helpers." Growing up, we always thought of those 'helpers' as police officers, firemen, doctors and parents.

As children grow, the more role models they have in their lives, the better. The influence an officer has over a student will differ vastly from that say of a math teacher. Both however are equally as important. An SRO gives students a different kind of relationship with law enforcement that they would not have otherwise. When a student is out in the world and sees another officer, they will automatically connect the positive interactions they had while in school, and will see each officer as someone there to help.

The perfect SRO needs to wear many hats as a role model such as counselor, coach, friend, officer, disciplinarian and champion. To feel more safe, we would have to agree, in that response time in the case of an emergency would be a non issue. There are many non-essential employees within school buildings. Some positions could safely be eliminated, especially in smaller districts. However, we feel that the presence of an SRO should be just as important as having a school nurse or principal.



Who says you can't ride a bull down a mountain? The Art Sled Rally at the Nansen Ski Club over the weekend was filled with creative sleds, laughter and good times as captured here.

The ice cream truck

BY GEORGE MATTHEWS

Groveton

The last in a trilogy!

The last in my series of miracles occurred when I was living in the trailer park in Lancaster. Like the bacon event, the thought of an ice cream truck was something that popped into my head occasionally and I did nothing about.

I'm not sure that I had ever seen or heard an ice cream truck, but there was that idealistic version of it floating around in my head. Tinkling bells, a horse drawn wagon with an ice cream vendor and lots of ice cream.

It was my weekend

to have the girls for the two days and they were there

this particular weekend. I don't know why but for some reason they were at my little trailer and I was up on Paige hill road just up from the park entrance. I had recently bought a small moped from Timberland where I worked and I was trying to sell it to my neighbor. He was very interested, but cash was tight everywhere and he was dragging his feet. I knew it bothered him when

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I rode it as he was afraid I would damage what he wanted to be his bike.

I had gone up the road a short distance and just turned around to come back when I heard the bell. It sounded exactly like what I thought an ice cream bell should sound like and it was coming from First Street in the park!

I motored back to the park in time to see a freshly painted ancient milk truck that said "ICE CREAM" all over it. I'm not sure I did more than stare at

it! I'm sure the kids would have liked to buy something, but I'm not even sure I had the cash to cover it.

I was recounting this story somewhere once and my daughter, Kim, was present. She exclaimed "I remember that!" She insists that "I did set up ice-creams all around!"

She wouldn't have been very old, but old enough to eat ice cream, hear bells and to know if the old man was too cheap to buy some! I have to quiz her about that. It never did take an interrogator like Jethro Gibbs of NCIS to extract information from her.

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Coping with stress after retirement

BY SHANNON LYNCH

Executive Director

For many people, the years after retirement are supposed to be free of stress. The children are grown and living on their own. The mortgage payments are over. Retirement provides freedom.

Stress? That's in the past.

Obviously, that's a

fallacy. Seniors have plenty of things to worry about as they grow older. For some, it's adjusting to a new routine that no longer includes working. For others, finances are a concern, as is a loss of independence. And for most, as they age, health issues arise.

Chronic stress has been shown to accelerate biologic aging and

to negatively affect the immune system, which is a major concern for seniors since our defense mechanisms weaken as we grow older. Here are four ways seniors can manage stress as they deal with life after retirement:

Recognize the Signs. You need to understand how your body reacts to stress in order to properly control it. Do you have trouble sleeping? Are you easily angered? Do you feel depressed? Is your energy level low? These

are all signs of stress. If you recognize any of these signs, talk to your health care provider.

Regular Exercise for Your Body. Yoga has been shown to reduce stress and improve senior health. Yoga comes in many forms, both spiritual and purely physical, allowing seniors to design a routine that works best for them. There are also many low-impact aerobics classes available to seniors. But you don't have to

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