



Two very happy things have occurred for this newsletter recently. First, we have more submissions than we have room for them! Even more wonderful, Cynthia Cervini has offered to be the editor for future newsletters; one of her plans is to expand available space by including only a part of longer columns in the newsletter, with a link to the full column online at our website. This means more space for more contributors, and we'll still be able to keep the newsletter to a manageable size. As ever, if there's something you would like to contribute for the newsletter, just let Cathy know at ASK4Kids@gmail.com . Happy Holidays, everyone!

Tricy Cushner, President

Cathryn Martin, Director

Middle School Night at Solaris

On Saturday, December 19th from 7 to 10 PM, middle school students are invited to a middle school social at Solaris Sports Club. Please see page 6 for more information.

Calendar

Mon, Dec. 14th, 7:15 PM
Teen Depression Community Response Meeting, Yorktown High School Library. Event is for parents and teachers only.

Tues, Dec 15th, 4-5 PM
Coalition meeting, Sparkle Lake Community Building

Sat, Dec 19th, 7-10 PM
Middle School social at Solaris Sports Club.

How I Broke the Law and Lost a Friend in the Process

By Cynthia Cervini

Apparently I'm in violation of penal code 265.05 – no, not texting while driving, I promised not to do that - no, specifically 265.05 reads '*it shall be unlawful for any person under the age of sixteen to possess any air gun, spring-gun or other instrument of weapon which the propelling force is a spring or air or any gun...*'

Listen, by no stretch am I under the age of sixteen (and my kids would tell you I don't know what it is like to be sixteen because MOM, YOU WERE NEVER SIXTEEN).

However, I **did** buy my son an airgun and a BB gun so that must make me guilty of something, right? He **is** under sixteen (twelve, actually) and in possession of said items so at the very least I am guilty by association.

When I heard about a Youth Court case where the defendants were in violation of penal code 265.05 (which was precisely the moment I found out we were in

Violation and that there even was a penal code 265.05 at all), I thought, what better way for The Shot (nickname for our son who, when asked "The dog threw up? How much?" used a metaphorical shotglass as a unit of measurement) to learn about the rules regarding teens and unlawful possession of weapons?

Before court convenes let me give you some background – sort of a guilty-with- explanation plea. My family is from a part of the south where a man's love affair with his gun starts early; in vitro, to be exact. The fact that my son was twelve before he got his first air gun is something of an anomaly in my family. I should also say that although we live on a mountain surrounded by wild turkey, deer, squirrels and the like, the only species that have ever suffered as a result of his BB gun are soda cans and bottles.

All rise...Court is in session!

The professionalism of the proceedings was impressive. Not only did the Youth Court members understand the

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The Alliance for Safe Kids, Inc., is a not-for profit 501(c)(3) corporation dedicated to keeping our kids out of harm's way. For further information, please email the Alliance at ASK4Kids@gmail.com or visit our website, www.AllianceForSafeKids.org

Neighborhood Watch Update

By Detective Sean Lewis

As far as the holidays this is a wonderful town, but every year we have our share of incidents involving holiday grinchers.

Here is some ***Holiday Neighborhood Watch*** information. It's kind of long, but worth looking at.

Festive and holiday seasons are also seasons to be wary of burglars, thieves, pickpockets, and other holiday problem makers. Nothing can ruin the spirit faster than becoming the victim of a crime.

Remember, whether you are leaving the house to go shopping or out for an evening of parties, lock your doors and windows! Do not leave the drapes or curtains open with your presents in plain view. Presents displayed around your hall can be a pretty sight, but can also be quite tempting to burglars. It's better to scatter the gifts around the house, in closets or cupboards, where they can't be so easily seen.

If you are leaving town for the holidays, make sure your home appears occupied. Leave inside and outside lights on timers and have your neighbors pick up newspapers, mail, and take flyers off your door. Ask neighbors to park in your driveway. Put a timer on a talk radio station for several hours a day.

After the holidays, do not put out empty boxes advertising your new purchases (VCR's, microwaves, etc.). Break them down and put them in the trash cans or in garbage bags. Better still, take them to a recycling bin.

When you're shopping, use the trunk of your car to keep your packages out of sight. Keep your car locked at all times. Be sure to make several trips to your car to deposit packages in the trunk. Don't allow yourself to become so burdened down with packages that you become a tempting target. When walking through parking lots, be sure that you are aware of your surroundings. Walk with authority. Do not look like a victim!

Be aware that thieves and pickpockets also do some of their biggest business during the holiday season. Ladies, do not dangle your handbag from your shoulder. You are creating a perfect setup for a snatch thief. Instead, keep your purse

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Bullying ... It's Not Just for Middle School

By Michael Bellizzi

I remember how terrified I was that September of my sophomore year. I'd come out over the summer, word leaked and now everyone was talking. People I never knew existed before glared at me, whispering, and girls approached in hopes they could recruit me as their new "gay best friend" to carry their shopping bags at the JV Mall and tell them how fabulous their hair looked. I had guy friends who hadn't been aware of my sexuality acting strange. I lost my friends, except one, since it was - and still is - considered "gay" to have, well... a "gay friend." No longer suppressed, I started expressing my interests more loosely. I expanded my taste in music and tried on clothes that I'd always preferred, but never could wear without people getting suspicious.

With my new skinny jeans and positive outlook on life came a lot of grief. Packs of homophobic guys would shout nasty remarks from their car windows; classmates would stare in amazement, as if I were of a different species; and my life became the worst cliché' after-school special you could imagine.

A common misconception is that bullying ends in middle school. For some of my classmates that was the case, but for me the bullying that began in high school continued to escalate. Already rejected on a much larger scale by society, it stung - more than I thought possible - to be shunned by the very people I'd spent hours making birthday presents for. Every day at school brought a new set of challenges that ran the gamut from simply entering the men's room to being told **by** a friend that someone I barely knew had threatened to "run Mike over with my truck if I ever see him walking in town." That was my lowest point. It saddened me knowing

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Update on Teen Speak

The Teen Speak at Hart Library was a standing room only event, and we wanted to thank those who planned and participated in it: Stephanie Carbone, Karen Profita, Andrea Fallick (from Student Assistance Services), Student Assistance Counselors Davia Bugge and Jodi Weisberger, Yorktown Police Officer Tom Nadoraski, Lakeland High School students Alicia Jacolow and Brianna Pisano, and Yorktown High School students Arya Viswanathan and Chris Novielli. Many thanks as well to Pat Barresi, librarian at John C. Hart Memorial Library for arranging usage of their space for the event, and all the parents and school administrators who were able to attend.

Last Call for Alcohol

By Art Lander

Well, the holiday season is upon us and there is no turning back. Now we start to ramp up for those shopping trips for the special things that will make the season a joyous one.

The holiday season is also one of the most dangerous times of the year for alcohol-related accidents and deaths in the USA. We attend office parties and family gatherings to celebrate with some holiday cheer ... and alcohol is usually the drink of choice. With the increase in television advertisements for alcohol around this time of year, we're bombarded with the message that anything alcoholic is just perfect for making the holidays a success.

Some of our local restaurants and sports bars are helping to make a difference during these holidays, some changing their closing hour to a time much earlier than the designated four AM allowed by law in New York State.

The Yorktown Police will continue to conduct DWI checks as well as continuing compliance checks to reduce underage drinking at our local establishments. But it's really up to all of us to do our part in taking the needed steps to be responsible when celebrating this time of the year.

Here are a few tips to stay safe during the holidays:

- * Do not make drinking the main focus of your holiday partying. If you are the host, make sure that you provide non-alcoholic drinks as well as food for all who attend. Stop serving drinks at least an hour before the end of the party. If at the end of the evening you find that one or more of your guests still needs some time to get sober, hey – why not recruit them for clean up, which will keep them around an extra hour or two? And I don't think I need to mention that serving minors is a truly terrible idea.
- * When attending events where alcohol is being served, have a designated driver who can provide transportation for those people who have been drinking. Do not ride with anyone who has been drinking.
- * If you're driving, remember that having three or four drinks can double your chances of being in an accident. By the time you reach seven or eight drinks, the likelihood of an accident increases by twenty five percent.
- * Monitor your alcohol consumption by reducing the number, size and frequency of alcoholic beverages you drink and avoid mixing alcohol with other drugs or over the counter medications.
- * Remember: depending on how much you weigh and how much you have had to eat, on average your body needs at least an hour to process and get rid of the alcohol in just one drink.

By following these tips you can ensure that it won't be your "Last Call for Alcohol" and you will have a safe holiday.

Art Lander is a retired Youth Officer with the Yorktown Police Department, and Director of the ASK Youth Court.

Neighborhood Watch... *Cont'd from pg 2*

tucked tightly under your arm. Better yet, do not even carry a purse. Place your checkbook, cash, or credit cards in your front pockets. Avoid carrying your checkbook, cash, and credit cards all together in one wallet, because if a thief gets the whole package together, they can cash checks with your identification and run up a large credit card bill in a short amount of time. Never give your credit card number over the telephone to anyone when you did not initiate the call. And be sure that you are dealing with a reputable company when ordering merchandise over the phone.

Do not flash large rolls of money in public. You never know who's watching! Also, spread your money around in different pockets. That way a pickpocket can't clean you out in one fell swoop. If you go to an automatic teller machine, try to go during the daylight hours. If you must go at night, pick a machine that is well-lit and visible to passing traffic. If anyone is lurking near the machine, pass it up and find another.

When dining out, valet parking is nice, but don't be too lax. Do not leave valuables in your vehicle or your house key with the attendant.

Just by using a little planning and some good old common sense, most holiday crimes can be avoided. Remember that if you have to drive, do NOT drink!

And remember - keep reporting any suspicious vehicles and people to 962-4141, especially during the week from about 10 AM to 3 PM. That's the time most daytime burglaries occur.

I would like to take this opportunity to wish all of you a safe and happy holiday season.

Sean Lewis is a detective with the Yorktown Police Department. If you are interested in starting a Neighborhood Watch program, he can be reached at 962-4141.

Bullying... *Cont'd from pg 2*

had that much animosity toward me, or, I should say, my sexual orientation. The shame I had felt during my closeted years was reignited as I was being fed negative input about my "lifestyle."

I remember one time, at free period, someone I hardly knew told me he didn't mind me just as long as I recognized that I was mentally ill; that gay people are diseased. Despite the fact that in 1973 the American Psychiatric Association removed homosexuality from the list of "mental disorders" (as if it should have ever been on there in the first place) this outdated, ignorant notion still prevails. In my head, I constantly parallel myself to Blacks in the segregated South, not only because they faced much prejudice (and still do), but because I share the same sea-sick feelings when walking into school. This isn't an occasional happening; it occurs in some form or another every day.

Involving myself in activities like Human Rights Campaign and Amnesty International, I informed myself of human rights abuses worldwide. This gave me more perspective, allowing me to see the big picture. By this time I had direction, I knew where I wanted to be. You see, I've always had a passion for film, and the desire to experience cultures other than my own. I knew these twin aspirations would take me far from the small-town cynical mindset I'd experienced.

Educators and parents need to promote diversity and acceptance by example because kids primarily learn by example. By the time they are teenagers, it's too late. Bullying should never be tolerated and teachers really need to set that tone. I had a few over the years who refused to look the other way and kids in their classrooms knew not to engage in hateful behavior.

Be the kind of adult that a child in pain feels comfortable reaching out to. Be the kind of parent who doesn't raise a harasser. Be progressive and open-minded, because it is people like this who that terrified sophomore needed along the way.

Michael Bellizzi attends Yorktown High School and has much more to say. Look for his column in future newsletters.

How I Broke the Law...*Cont'd from pg1*

law, they were also able to convey the reasoning behind the code to the two young defendants who, in turn, understood the seriousness of their actions. My son absorbed far more in the thirty minutes he observed the Youth Court trial than he ever would hearing about the rules governing BB guns from me.

Back in the car, before I could reach around to pat myself on the back for a slam dunk of an evening, The Shot started asking about other cases that had gone through Youth Court (he gets a good kid's vicarious thrill hearing how bad other kids can be). I'm not quite sure how my own comeuppance started; I might have said that I was proud of the fact that he is, all in all, a pretty good kid. He looked at me like I'd suddenly sprouted another head.

"Do you think I'm a good kid because I *want* to be good?" (well, the thought did cross my mind). "I'm only good because I am **PETRIFIED OF MY MOTHER**". Oh. Talk about mixed emotions...

Maybe the Department of Criminal Justice should launch a study: scary mother as a deterrent to juvenile delinquency. During the rest of the ride home I was regaled with examples of times he could have gone wrong but hadn't. Apparently this isn't a result of taking the moral high road or some kind of intrinsic goodness. No, not my boy. Truth be told, he is afraid of the fallout from his mother. According to him I've got "backbone", and now instead of saying "love you" when I leave in the morning his parting words to me are "scared of you."

I don't think this is a bad thing. I've never felt the need to be my kids' friend. They have plenty of friends but, last I checked, only two parents. I have my own friends and not one of them has caused me any pain near the amount I experienced during childbirth. Jim from Karate recently outlined for his fifteen-year-old daughter the responsibilities of parents: to clothe, feed, shelter, educate, teach right from wrong, teach responsibility ... the list goes on, but he has verified that nowhere on the list does it say we have to be their friends. So I'm in the clear.

Neither are we responsible for their happiness. If my children are happy – well, sure I'm delighted, but I'm not going to compromise my position so they won't be mad at me when, say, I won't let them go to a house when I know the parents aren't home. Last summer my daughter was furious when I called her out in front of her friend for the way she spoke to me. Cardinal sin - don't embarrass them in front of their friends. She didn't speak to me for days. The upside: for as long as her stony silence lasted, I didn't have to drive her anywhere and saved a whole lot of money. Hey, I figure while she isn't talking to me she can't hit me up for anything.

A recent Sunday New York Times had an interesting article, "[Becoming the Alpha Dog at Home](#)" about how parents are embracing the philosophy of Cesar Millan (aka the Dog Whisperer). Children, like dogs, crave structure. Dog trainers don't think discipline equals being mean; why should parents? It is a more traditional hierarchical child-raising philosophy. Mr. Millan explains, "for thousands of years, the elder has always been the pack leader; it's never the child." The author of DaddyCast, a parenting podcast series, warns us "pampering and never punishing will make a child crazy and unlikable." Who needs a crazy, unlikable child anyway?

Scary Mom- can you see it catching on?

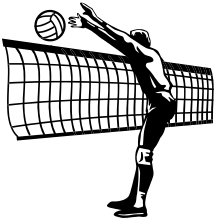
Scary Mom- it's more than just a Halloween costume.

Scary Mom- it does a child good.

Cynthia Cervini is a guidance counselor and parent who is at work on a blog called Scary Mom.

Do you share the ASK newsletter?

If you do, we'd love to know. If you share printed copies, or forward the newsletter along via email, could you let us know roughly how many people receive it? The newsletter is partly funded by a federal grant, and knowing these figures helps tremendously. *Thank you -*



The Alliance for Safe Kids (ASK), Inc.

**Invites ALL 6th, 7th and 8th Graders
to a**

Music and Sports PARTY

**Hosted by Solaris Sports Club
201 Veterans Road**

on

**Saturday, December 19
7-10 pm**

The event will include:

- Music light show by DJ Kev*
- Non-stop Volleyball and Basketball*
- Holiday snacks to keep you energized*

**Call ahead or email to get on the VIP List and
pay only \$5 when you arrive!**

**The event is limited to the first 300 registrants. If you do not pre-register,
the entrance is \$10, provided the event is not already sold out.**

**Register now by calling The Alliance for Safe Kids at
736-1450 or emailing ASK4Kids@gmail.com.**

**The event will be supervised by members of ASK, Solaris Sports Club and the
Yorktown Leos Club. Any parents interested in helping, please contact ASK.**

*All proceeds to benefit The Alliance for Safe Kids, Inc, a 501(c)(3) Yorktown-based
organization dedicated to keeping our kids out of harm's way.*

Please visit our website at www.AllianceForSafeKids.org