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# PUBLIC LIFE

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Owensboro, Kentucky

## Advocate

A large, dark silhouette of a person from the back, holding a chainsaw. The person is facing away from the viewer, and the chainsaw is held in their right hand, pointing downwards.

# Random Violence:

How vulnerable is  
Owensboro-Daviess  
County to mass  
killers?



Register Today!

Community Dialogue on  
**High quality early  
childhood education:**

*Do we value it enough to fund it?*

**Wednesday, June 5th**  
**Logsdon Community Center**

**8:00am – 12:30pm**  
(includes continental breakfast and lunch)

**685-2652 or [info@plfo.org](mailto:info@plfo.org)**

### Also in This Edition:

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Coalition making a difference for low income individuals and families

Children's savings accounts – a proven way to get kids on a college track

# Random Violence:



## How vulnerable is Owensboro-Daviess County to mass killers?

### The tragedies continue

The news reports are not that uncommon anymore. Schools, movie theaters, public assemblies. Some are connected to political statements that target officials; others are senseless killings in which children are the victims.

Have we accepted these massacres as merely regrettable? Beyond our control? They run together now. Few of us remember them all.

Fifteen years ago, one incident brought it close to home: Outside Paducah, Kentucky three students were killed and five wounded while participating in a prayer circle at Health High School. Since then, the following incidents have occurred:

Dec 15, 1997	School parking lot, Stamps, Arkansas	<b>2 wounded</b>
Mar 24, 1998	Middle School, Jonesboro, Arkansas	<b>5 killed, 10 wounded</b>
Apr 24, 1998	Middle School dance, Edinboro, Pennsylvania	<b>1 killed, 2 wounded</b>
May 19, 1998	High School parking lot, Fayetteville, Tennessee	<b>1 killed</b>
May 21, 1998	High School cafeteria, Springfield, Oregon	<b>2 killed, 22 wounded</b>
Jun 15, 1998	School hallway, Richmond, Virginia	<b>2 wounded</b>
Apr 20, 1999	Columbine High School, Littleton, Colorado	<b>13 killed, 21 wounded</b>
Jul 29, 1999	Day trading firm, Atlanta, Georgia	<b>Wife, 2 children killed with a hammer; 12 killed, 13 wounded</b>
Sep 15, 1999	Christian rock concert and prayer rally, Fort Worth, Texas	<b>7 killed, 7 wounded</b>
Dec 26, 2000	Edgewater Technology, Wakefield, Massachusetts	<b>7 killed</b>
Jul 8, 2003	Lockheed Martin plant, Meridian, Mississippi	<b>7 killed, 7 wounded</b>
Mar 12, 2005	Church meeting at Sheraton Hotel, Brookfield, Wisconsin	<b>9 killed, 4 wounded</b>
Mar 21, 2005	Red Lake Senior High School, Red Lake, Wisconsin	<b>11 killed, 5 wounded</b>
Mar 25, 2006	Capitol Hill, Seattle, Washington	<b>7 killed, 2 wounded</b>
Oct 2, 2006	Amish school house, Lancaster, Pennsylvania	<b>5 girls killed, 6 wounded</b>

Feb 12, 2007	Trolley Square Mall, Salt Lake City	<b>5 killed, 4 wounded</b>
Apr 16, 2007	Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, Virginia	<b>32 killed, 14 wounded</b>
Dec 5, 2007	Westroads Mall, Omaha, Nebraska	<b>9 killed, 4 wounded</b>
Feb 7, 2008	City Hall, Kirkwood, Missouri	<b>6 killed, 2 wounded</b>
Feb 14, 2008	Northern Illinois University, DeKalb, Illinois	<b>6 killed, 21 wounded</b>
Mar 29, 2009	Nursing home, Carthage, North Carolina	<b>8 killed</b>
Apr 3, 2009	Immigration Center, Binghamton, New York	<b>13 killed, 4 wounded</b>
Nov 5, 2009	Fort Hood Army Base, Texas	<b>13 killed, 29 wounded</b>
Aug 3, 2010	Hartford Beer Distributor, Manchester, Connecticut	<b>9 killed, 2 wounded</b>
Jan 8, 2011	Political event, Safeway Market, Tuscan, Arizona	<b>6 killed, 13 wounded</b>
Sep 6, 2011	IHOP restaurant, Carson City, Nevada	<b>5 killed, 7 wounded, including three National Guardsmen</b>
Oct 14, 2011	Hair salon, Seal Beach, California	<b>8 killed, 1 wounded</b>
Feb 27, 2012	Chardon High School , Chardon, Ohio	<b>5 killed, 3 wounded</b>
Apr 2, 2012	Oikos University, Oakland, California	<b>7 killed</b>
Apr 6, 2012	Tulsa, Oklahoma	<b>3 killed, 2 wounded</b>
May 29, 2012	Cafe Racer Espresso, Seattle, Washington	<b>5 killed</b>
Jul 20, 2012	Movie theater, Aurora, Colorado	<b>12 killed, 58 wounded</b>
Aug 5, 2012	Sikh Temple, Oak Creek, Wisconsin	<b>6 killed, 4 wounded</b>
Sep 27, 2012	Accent Signage Systems, Minneapolis, Minnesota	<b>5 killed, 3 wounded</b>
Dec 11, 2012	Clackamas Town Center, Oregon	<b>3 killed</b>
Dec 14, 2012	Sandy Hook Elementary School, Newtown, Connecticut	<b>20 students and 6 adults killed, plus the shooter's mother</b>
Apr 15, 2013	Boston Marathon, Boston, Massachusetts	<b>3 killed (by two pressure cooker bombs), 1 MIT police officer killed, 264 wounded</b>  <b>One bomber killed, the other incarcerated</b>



These massacres took 279 lives and left more than 500 with injuries. In 14 of the 36 events, the culprits killed themselves. Two were killed by police. Three were tried and convicted.

Motives can be difficult to assess, but there are indications that the killings were the result of mental illness, financial difficulties, termination from a job, disgruntled employees,

religious intolerance, political statements, racial motives, family problems and more.

Guns were used in every incident. The last one listed – the incident that occurred during the Boston Marathon – also involved homemade bombs. Some had access to guns in the home; some guns were stolen.

## A culture of guns

- In the U.S., there are 97 guns per 100 persons
- 40-45 percent of households are estimated to have a gun
- The U.S. has more than 11,000 homicides committed per year with guns (70 percent of all homicides)
- In 2007, there were 270 million civilian-owned firearms in the U.S. (up from 230 million in 2001)
- There are more guns, but it is not clear if there are more gun owners.
- Total firearms produced in the U.S. (minus exports):
  - 3.5 million (1998)
  - 3.7 million (2007)
  - 6.1 million (2011)



## How vulnerable are we?

Owensboro-Daviess County has six high schools, four middle schools, 17 elementary schools and various private and home schools. Numerous school activities involve public assemblies that could be at risk if an attack occurs.

Other facilities and gatherings are vulnerable: community sports and recreation facilities, performing arts theaters, cinemas, retail stores, restaurants, child care centers, churches, parks, parades, festivals, exhibitions, rallies, demonstrations, charity events, workplaces and more.

Is it practical, is it necessary, to secure these buildings and gatherings? Do we have emergency plans and procedures in place if there is a threatening incident? Are administrators and law enforcement personnel equipped and trained for these occasions?

Are we vulnerable?

**“It is virtually impossible to prevent random acts of senseless violence; however, we do everything in our power to ensure our officers are prepared to**

**address such tragedies should they occur. We have an assessment team that we make available to our school system, churches, and retailers to evaluate their respective emergency plans, make suggestions on how they may improve their security, and, most importantly, we inform them what to expect from OPD should a violent situation arise. We encourage members of the public to call when they see something suspicious. It is this type of community vigilance along with a well-trained police force that makes Owensboro less attractive to would-be criminals,”** said Colonel Art Ealum, Owensboro Chief of Police.

**“Working cooperatively with the OPD and other state agencies, we revise our safety plans each year to reflect the most up-to-date research from law enforcement,”** said David Johnson, Owensboro Public Schools Assistant Superintendent for Pupil Personnel, Transportation, and Maintenance.

## So how can communities respond, take precautions?

The National Issues Forum suggests three approaches that communities can take:

**1**

### Reduce the threat of mass shootings.

- Restrict assault weapons, high-capacity magazines, and armor-piercing ammunition
- Make it easier for someone to be involuntarily committed to a mental health facility
- Require citizens to show cause for concealed carry permits
- Require citizens to keep firearms outside the home in secure places
- Require mandatory background checks on firearm purchases

**2**

### Equip people to defend themselves.

- Post more guards and security officers in schools and public places
- Allow law-abiding citizens to carry concealed firearms and expand self-defense training
- Drill teachers and students on ways to protect themselves
- Arm teachers and administrators so they can protect themselves
- Identify those who appear unbalanced or potential threats

**3**

### Root out violence in society.

- Reduce media coverage so killers are not guaranteed notoriety
- Realign social services around violence prevention
- Restrict depictions of violence in video games and mass media
- Crackdown on bullying and teach conflict resolution

None of these options suggest an easy fix. One option is not necessarily a right or wrong answer. There may be elements of all the options that warrant consideration. There may be other, better options. These strategies deserve to be examined objectively by officials, teachers, parents, law enforcement personnel and concerned citizens.



## The gun debate

### Opponents of gun control

Opponents of gun control point to the public's constitutional right to bear arms. They stand by the Second Amendment and point to the widespread prevalence of guns in society: *If guns are outlawed, only outlaws will have guns.*

Opponents of gun control claim that gun laws don't work. They say that states and cities that have some of the toughest gun control laws have some of the highest rates of violent crime.

*"The only thing that stops a bad guy with a gun is a good guy with a gun."*

**Wayne LaPierre**

Executive Vice President, National Rifle Association



In Chicago, residents must undergo multiple background checks, take a training class, acquire a state identification card and firearm permit with the police, but only three percent completed the gun owner permitting process.

Some say that enforcement is the problem. Rep. Tom Price (R-Ga.) recently told the *National Journal Daily*: "I'd be happy to look at any piece of legislation that anybody brings forward as it relates to federal gun control – when the administration begins to enforce the current laws."

### Supporters of gun control

Supporters of gun control include many law enforcement groups. Most are strong supporters of the second amendment, but they are concerned about the availability of sophisticated weapons of war that are making their way to our streets and neighborhoods.

Recent surveys (following the Sandy Hook killings) indicate that 90 percent of Americans support universal background checks.

Supporters challenge the notion that gun laws are ineffective. A report released by the Center of American Progress concluded that "... the 10 states with the weakest gun laws collectively have an aggregate level of gun violence that is more than twice as high – 104 percent higher, in fact, than the 10 states with the strongest gun laws ...the report confirms what I experienced during my 25 years as a federal agent – firearms laws work," said David Chipman, former special agent at the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms.

*"The gun lobby finds waiting periods inconvenient. You have only to ask my husband how inconvenient he finds his wheelchair from time to time."*



**Sarah Brady**

Co-founder Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence  
(James Brady was Press Secretary for President Ronald Reagan)

Many Americans believe that the gun control laws that are on the books now are much stricter than they actually are. For instance, hundreds of people on the terrorist watch list are not only able to buy guns legally but also have passed background checks. About half of Americans don't know that military-style assault weapons are legal.

### POINT

### COUNTER-POINT

*"Do we go to the Ford Motor Company and tell them to stop making automobiles because people get drunk and kill people in cars?"*



**Jesse Ventura**

Former Governor of Minnesota



**Jon Stewart**

The Daily Show

*"No...but we can adopt strict blood alcohol limits and raise the drinking age and ramp up enforcement penalties and charge bartenders who serve drunks and launch huge public awareness campaigns to stigmatize the dangerous behavior in question... And we do all that because we might just help bring drunk driving rates down..." (Drunk driving rates decreased by two-thirds from 1973 to 2007.)*





## Searching for common ground

The positions held by either side in the gun control debate appear hopelessly deadlocked.

Perhaps continued dialogue will enable us to find common ground.

What values should drive our decisions?

Will lobbyists, fundraising and partisan allegiances on both sides drive our decisions?

What kind of community, what kind of state and nation do we want for our children, and our children's children?

A well regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed.

**Second Amendment**

# Kentucky Gun Laws and Restrictions

## The Commonwealth of Kentucky ...

- **does not** require a state permit to purchase a gun
- **does not** require firearm registration
- **does not** have a law restricting assault weapons
- **does not** have a law restricting magazine capacity
- **does not** require owner licenses
- **does** require permits for concealed handguns
- **does** allow the carry of guns openly without a permit
- **does** allow the restriction of guns in government buildings, any establishment licensed to dispense alcoholic beverages on premises and any elementary or secondary school facility



# The Imagination Library:

Instilling a love of reading in preschoolers

## Reading is essential

The ability to read well is the foundation for learning and key to academic success. Reading develops the mind; it sparks the imagination. Reading is our window on the world and a key determinant to a successful life.

Tragically, many of our youth are unable to read well. In many instances, reading, learning and academic progress are not valued by their parents or guardians. There are few, if any,

books in the home. Only 53 percent of children aged three through five are read to daily by a family member. Thirty percent of fourth graders cannot read at a basic level.

## A great idea, a great program

The Imagination Library program addresses that challenge. Established in 1996 by entertainer Dolly Parton, a local affiliate was established in 2007. There are 1,600 programs in the U.S. (27 in Kentucky) that serve 700,000 children.



The program's purpose: to provide books in the home to children from birth to the age of five. Once they enter kindergarten, books from school libraries are available.

Each child who is enrolled in Imagination Library receives a new, high quality, age appropriate book every month, delivered to the home without charge. Upon completion of five years in the program, children have a library of 60 classic titles.

For \$30 per year, enrolled preschoolers receive a new, high quality, age appropriate book delivered to their home every month.

The local program has been made possible through generous sponsor support. Local participants must reside in Daviess County. Volunteers coordinate registration with the national organization. A community advisory panel promotes the program at child care centers, hospital nurseries and various community events. The panel also writes grants and organizes fundraisers to support the program.

### All for the kids

The program has no operating overhead. All proceeds are used to purchase and distribute books. The average book costs \$2.35 including shipping. For a \$30 annual sponsorship, a child is mailed 12 books, one each month.

Since October 2007, the local program has grown from 264 participants to 2,364 in May 2013. Each child receives "The

Little Engine that Could" as their first book when they enter the program regardless of age. Each child receives "Look Out Kindergarten Here I Come" when they exit the program on the month of their fifth birthday. All the other books are based on the child's age. A few Spanish books are available upon request.

Books are reviewed annually to assure that they are of high quality and age appropriate.

### Challenges:

**Increase participation.** An estimated 6,700 children in Daviess County are under the age of five. The program serves approximately 2,500 children; more than 4,000 children are not yet participating.

**Educate the community.** To qualify, the only stipulation is for participants to be under five years of age and live in Daviess County. The public needs to be informed about this special learning opportunity.

**Attract more sponsors.** To serve every child in Daviess County:

- \$30 per child annual cost
- \$30 x 4,200 children not served = \$126,000
- \$600 to endow a sponsorship for one child
- \$2.5 million to endow the program

# Will the effectiveness of Medicaid expansion be stymied due to a primary care shortage?

The Affordable Care Act provides federal funds for states to expand Medicaid coverage to 138 percent of the poverty level. The poverty level for a single mother with two children: an annual income of no more than \$19,530; 138 percent of the poverty level is \$26,951.

States can choose whether or not they want to participate in the Medicaid expansion. On May 9, 2013, Governor Steve Beshear announced that Kentucky would participate. This will enable Kentucky's 640,000 uninsured citizens (approximately 20,000 in Daviess County) to be covered under the Medicaid expansion or Health Benefit Exchanges.

The federal government will absorb the cost of the Medicaid expansion for the first three years, decreasing to 90 percent by 2020.

## **Too expensive, more government**

Opponents of the Medicaid expansion are concerned about the role of government programs in our health care system. They prefer a market-based approach that is driven by private health care providers, physicians, hospitals and insurance companies.

They are also concerned about the cost and sustainability when expanded Medicaid is turned back to the state.

## **Better for health and health care, and cheaper in the long term?**

Proponents of the Medicaid expansion point out that

...fewer people will forego care because of costs.

...more uninsured people will have access to care before health conditions worsen. This will improve health outcomes and reduce health care costs.

...fewer patients will rely on emergency room care. Instead, with health insurance, they will have an option to turn to a primary care provider.\* This will reduce emergency room costs and patients will benefit from more of a prevention

focus by having a medical home.

*\*Primary care doctors generally include family/general practitioners, internists, pediatricians, and obstetricians/gynecologists.*

## **Shortage of primary care**

With this infusion of people in need of primary care soon to be covered by Medicaid, is Owensboro-Daviess County prepared to serve that need? Where will the primary care providers come from?

According to Owensboro Health, Owensboro-Daviess County currently needs eight additional primary care physicians, one pediatrician, and two internists. This does not include the primary care needs after the Medicaid expansion creates additional need.

Some local physicians don't think the shortage is severe, but they are concerned that some nurse practitioners are providing primary care without adequate supervision.

## Are bold health and health care initiatives warranted?

### Will our next generation continue this pattern?

Kentucky ranks:

- 50th in smoking
- 40th in obesity
- 43rd in sedentary lifestyle
- 41st in diabetes
- 50th in cancer deaths
- 49th in cardiac heart disease
- 43rd in high cholesterol
- 44th in annual dental visits
- 48th in heart attacks

## What about the children?

Children from low-income families are covered by the Kentucky Children's Health Insurance Program (K-CHIP). Nonetheless, several years ago, many parents/guardians had not taken the initiative to enroll their children in the program. A promotional campaign led by the United Way increased K-CHIP enrollment from 8,255 (December 2009) to 9,252 (December 2010).

## Will reimbursements be high enough?

The central question: Will the expanded Medicaid program feature reimbursements that are high enough to entice health care providers to accept the infusion of patients expected when many more people will qualify for Medicaid? If not, many of these patients will, once again, end up seeking care in the emergency room.

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# Coalition making a difference for low income individuals and families

The Green River Asset Building Coalition, spearheaded and administered by the Lawrence and Augusta Hager Educational Foundation, is developing and expanding several programs to help low income individuals and families in our area get on solid financial footing.

"The Earned Income Tax Credit is the best anti-poverty bill, the best pro-family measure and the best job-creation measure to come out of the Congress of the United States."

**President Ronald Reagan**

## Free income tax preparation, increased refunds

This year, more than 130 volunteer and trained tax preparers, site coordinators, screeners, and greeters completed and processed 3,943 income tax returns – more than 12 times the 305 returns that were prepared when the program was launched in 2005.

These returns produced nearly \$2.1 million in Earned Income Tax Credits, \$245,000 in child tax credits, \$161,000

in education tax credits, and more than \$5.4 million in total refunds. Since its inception, the program has generated \$26.6 million in total refunds and \$10.3 million in Earned Income Tax Credits.

## Reducing financial pressures

The important work of the Green River Asset Building Coalition has enabled low income individuals and families to reduce their financial pressure and debt, make a down payment on a car or an apartment, or contribute to a college fund. It has helped them avoid preparation fees, cash advance and payday lenders. Refunds and savings have also produced an infusion of \$26.6 million into the area economy.

Volunteers at 13 sites in six counties are to be saluted. The site at Owensboro Community and Technical College led the way, where volunteers prepared 1,240 returns.

Hats off to the Green River Asset Building Coalition, its leaders and volunteers – and particularly Keith Sanders of the Hager Foundation – for developing this valuable service for our community and region.



# Children's savings accounts yield impressive results

The Green River Asset Building Coalition also promotes programs that can be a big help to low-income individuals and families: banking, financial literacy, children's saving accounts and more.

Many families that struggle financially live day-to-day, paycheck to paycheck, are not inclined to plan for things like a college education. Only 10 percent of low-income students obtain college diplomas by their mid-twenties.

Nonetheless, students with savings accounts are four times more likely to attend college and more likely to complete their degree, and students with a savings account in their own name are six times more likely to go to college.

“... students with a savings account in their own name are six times more likely to go to college.”

By setting a savings goal and devising a plan, students do not just create an asset to offset the cost of higher education; they avoid or reduce student loans, build confidence, and internalize the importance of education and its capacity to shape one's quality of life.

Students need to be reminded that

- a high school degree can earn someone \$1.3 million more over a lifetime
- a college degree can earn someone \$2.3 million more over a lifetime

Starting to save for college while a child is young builds aspirations and decreases high school dropout rates.

To make that happen, it takes planning, systematic savings, parental involvement/training, and partners (e.g., banks,

PTO's, corporate sponsors, hospitals, foundations, etc.)

Hospitals can make a bold statement about the value of education by establishing an educational savings account as babies are born in their facilities.

Partners are known to match personal and family contributions, and leverage funds with other donors to help bridge the gap between available funds and the cost of postsecondary education. Typically, withdrawals are restricted until after high school.

Children's savings accounts represent another strategy to improve the circumstances and prospects for low-income individuals and families.

