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Opinion Piece February 3, 2013

**“Stop the Assault on Our Most Defenseless Members of Society”**

Here in the United States, violence has somehow become culturally acceptable. Nowhere is that fact more evident than in Bridgeport. Bullying, child abuse, domestic violence, and other crimes are daily occurrences in many of our children’s lives. And, the presence of guns and gun violence has become absurdly commonplace throughout the city’s neighborhoods.

This past year was a particularly difficult and violent one for Bridgeport. We were shocked by the shooting deaths of a number of children, including a 15-year-old who was shot while sitting on her front porch after a Sweet Sixteen party, and a 3-year-old who was caught in the cross fire while being picked up from daycare by her mother. These senseless shootings must stop.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Children’s Defense Fund, the number of preschoolers nationwide killed by guns in 2008 and 2009 was nearly double the number of law enforcement officers killed in the line of duty over the same time frame.

Even more striking is that since 1979, America has lost nearly three times as many children and teens to gunfire as the number of U.S. military personnel killed in action during the Vietnam War, and over 23 times the number of U.S. military personnel killed in action in Iraq and Afghanistan. We cannot, and should not, tolerate this continued assault on our most defenseless members of society.

We at the Bridgeport Child Advocacy Coalition support all efforts to put common sense regulations in place to protect our children from further injury and death from guns. That’s why we are in support of the legislative agenda put forth by Connecticut Against Gun Violence, which includes:

- a ban on high-capacity ammunition magazines;
- a reinstated and strengthened assault weapons ban;
- the requirement of permits and universal background checks on ALL sales and transfers of guns;
- making gun owners liable for negligent storage;
- a ban on the right of way for transportation of firearms and ammunition purchased over the Internet;
- taxing ammunition sales;
- the requirement of a license or permit to purchase any gun or ammunition;
- and the restriction of handgun sales to one gun per month.

This debate about gun safety has been going on for far too long. Yet, we remain hopeful that this year is the year that debate will result in real action. As Frances Hodges Burnett wrote in the children's book *The Secret Garden* in 1911, "At first people refuse to believe that a strange new thing can be done, then they begin to hope it can be done, then they see it can be done—then it is done and all the world wonders why it was not done centuries ago." We hope that in the future, Burnett's words ring true as we look back on this time—a time to act.

Mary Pat Healy  
Executive Director

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