From:	Allison Franz
To:	Grp. City Council and City Web Site
Subject:	Concerns about "Be Safe" curriculum efforts
Date:	Wednesday, February 3, 2021 7:20:10 PM

Dear City Councilors,

I am concerned about current efforts to insert the “Be Safe” curriculum in Missoula schools. While I don’t doubt the good intentions of this effort, its messaging is problematic. At best, it puts the onus on kids to not access guns, instead of where it belongs — on adults. At worst, the program seems to glorify firearms and can lead to a disconnect from the serious, often fatal ramifications of guns.

I do not disagree that kids should know that if they find a firearm, they should not touch it and tell an adult. But, as any parent or person who’s worked with children knows, kids are curious and impulsive and do not always listen or follow the rules, despite how many times they’ve been told. The ramifications of this are minimal in most situations. But when a loaded, unsecured weapon is involved, the consequences can be fatal. Sadly, I know this first-hand. Despite learning the “don’t touch and tell an adult” brand of gun safety, my cousin’s 9-year-old was shot and killed in Belgrade after he and another boy found a loaded, unsecured handgun.

When we talk about gun safety in Montana, the conversation must include responsible storage of firearms, which means storing them locked, unloaded and separate from ammunition. Unfortunately, the "Be Safe" program does not do this, and I am concerned that parents whose children learn the "Be Safe" curriculum will believe their job is done, and they may not store their firearms responsibly as a result.

Failure to address responsible storage can also have dire consequences for older children and teens who, after experiencing fleeting thoughts of suicide, may complete a permanent act because they had access to an unsecured gun.

If you choose to move forward with this effort, I urge you to also support holding complementary programming for parents on responsible firearm storage. Missoula has several instructors certified in the Be SMART program who would be more than happy to present this training in schools. You can learn more about this initiative at www.besmartforkids.org.

Thank you,
Allison Franz
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