

The national rifle association's eddie eagle gun safety program



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Before the turn of the 21st century Americans learned a whole new aspect about gun violence and gun related deaths. Gun violence has always been a major problem in a country that strongly believes in the right to bear arms. The only problem is that children are now having access to guns and in recent times they are using it to kill. It is at this crucial time that the Eddie Eagle Gun Safety Program comes in as either the solution to the problem or just a pretender giving false hope to parents and concerned citizens everywhere.

This paper will look at the effectivity of the National Rifle's Association's ("NRA") drive to promote gun safety and to curb gun related deaths as it pertains to children. The said program is called Eddie Eagle Gun Safety Program ("Eddie Eagle"). This study will look at various researches taken from various sources to verify the claim that the said gun safety program is working wonders with children and the youth. Gun Violence It is all over the news. Crimes and accidental deaths, that are gun related.

In a study made three years after the Columbine High School shooting, confirms that there are more deaths that can be attributed to youth and gun use aside from school shootings, and the report says: Thousands more use guns to attempt suicide, and these attempts prove successful more often than suicides attempted by other means. Countless other children and youth, though not injured or killed themselves are survivors of gun violence, scarred by the effects of such violence in their homes, schools, or communities (Reich, Culross, & Bherman, 2002).

The problem is exacerbated by the fact that laws could not be simply ratified to ban guns altogether or to limit the use of guns to law enforcement
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agencies. Many will insist that it is a basic right to have that ability to protect themselves, their family, and their property. “ But rather than offering protection as some have claimed, several studies evaluating the protective effect of home ownership found that keeping a gun in the home increases the risk of gun-related homicide, suicide, and fatal unintentional injury” (Lytton, 2005).

Eddie Eagle Based on the description of the problem it is clear that there needs to be a solution that would effectively reduce gun violence, death, injuries and accidents when it comes to children and the youth. The solution must also be tailor made so that U. S. citizens can still continue to have guns in their homes if they so choose. The ingenious solution comes from the National Rifle Association (“ NRA”). It is called the Eddie Eagle Gun Safety Program.

According to Cornell in his book *School Violence: Fears Versus Facts*, the Eddie Eagle is an educational program and he adds, “ The program emphasizes a 'just say no' approach to dangerous behavior such as playing with a firearm ... the NRA claimed credit for the 13 percent nationwide reduction in gun-related injuries to children from 1991 to 1992 (2006, p. 70). In the official web site of the NRA one can see the image of an adorable mascot coming into class, demonstrating and teaching gun safety tips.

In a few basic steps the mascot will make the children understand the importance of being alert and well knowledgeable about the dangers of handling guns. And so they will indoctrinate the kids on the value of the following rules: If you see a gun: Stop! Don't Touch. Leave the Area. Tell an Adult. For a concerned parent this program heaven-sent. The world of gun
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use there seems to be no place for children. How can society teach very young children about a topic that is beyond their age level?

Then the Eddie Eagle mascot comes in with a very simple and fun way of learning gun safety and all seems well. Finally, the most important message is being sent across through a medium that is kid friendly. It is not only the packaging of the program that is so endearing. The NRA also stresses the fact that these methodologies came from the minds of the best clinical psychologists, reading specialists, teachers, curriculum specialists, urban safety officials, and law enforcement personnel (see NRAHQ, 2007).

This program is the best there is and it is surely making a difference in the hearts and minds of children when it comes to gun use. Critics With the use of a mascot and some catchy phrases the NRA is very much confident that their program is creating significant changes. The adorable mascot alone is a major factor in making the program a hit with children. Now, considering that the program begun in 1988 and since then has reached 20 million children in all 50 states, this suggests a snowballing effect that will sooner or later engulf the whole of America.

Based on the current trends it is likely that after a few more years of intense campaigning, the children of America will be forewarned about the danger of gun use and that they will be educated on what to do in case they see a gun lying around the house. But critics are not impressed by the Eddie Eagle Program. They claim that parents are prone to believe what they want and therefore this leads to an erroneous assumption that by simply telling kids what to do, the same will turn around and do what they are told. In real life

situation the reverse is often true because kids gets curious and wants to touch the guns.

In a study designed to test the Eddie Eagle Program and other gun safety programs geared for kids the results are less than encouraging. The study reveals that after undergoing the Eddie Eagle Program the children - four and five year old participants - can reproduce verbally gun-safety skills yet the program fails to make the kids do what they say in class when they are placed in a simulated situation (Lytton, 2005, p. 59). This simply means that education alone does not totally eradicate the problem of gun related violence and accidents.

The pull of curiosity is too much for children. It is the height of naivety to believe that kids will not be tempted to approach a gun and handle it. There is that urge to pull the trigger to find out what it is like. There is that need to lift it up and look inside the barrel, to feel the weight of the gun and to feel the smoothness of the finish. Why is it that this scenario is not so hard to believe? The answer is simple every one has gone through the childhood and it is hard to deny these impulses. The kids will naturally want to know more.

The weakness of the program can be due to the fact that there is really no effective simulation made wherein kids are allowed to see a real gun. If the Eddie Eagle Program will suddenly upgrade their techniques and allow for the use of real guns in the classroom then the weakness of the methodology does not end there. Say for example that the gun used for the teaching exercise is a revolver. Then say that the children will fully internalize the message of the program and then if they see a revolver lying around the house they will go tell an adult.

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But what if the gun that they will find in their homes is different from the one that was seen in class? Then the natural instincts will kick in, tempting the kids to look at the never before seen weapon and their curiosity will surely be aroused. Conclusion The Eddie Eagle Program is indeed an ingenious way of solving gun related violence and accidents. The people behind the program must be commended for creating a program that will bridge the gap between the adult world of guns and the world of children who really do not know much about the destructive capability of hand guns.

The positive feedback concerning the program is not hard to believe. It is common knowledge that when children are properly trained then they will behave in a way they are taught to behave. The mascots and the easy to remember rules can also be cited as the main factors for the success of the program. But not all are convinced that the Eddie Eagle Program is an effective tool in solving gun related deaths and injuries especially concerning children playing with guns.

Highly controlled studies were mentioned a while ago and there is reason to believe that in the real world children tend to become very curious when they see a gun lying around. The tendency is that they will play with and in most cases will pull the trigger. This means that the only sure way of preventing accidents in the home is to simply ban the use of firearms. Yet since this is impossible then let programs such as Eddie Eagle Program continue. It is better than doing nothing. The NRA can also be encouraged to improve their program.