

KENTUCKY'S
SCHOOL RESOURCE
OFFICERS PROTECT
AND SERVE AN
INTEGRAL PART OF
THE COMMUNITY
IN SCHOOLS
THROUGHOUT THE
COMMONWEALTH

ABBIE DARST | PROGRAM COORDINATOR



Protecting Our Most Valuable Resource

Imagine a mammoth event coordinated in a local city drawing nearly 20,000 young people through the doors from all different ages, ethnicities and socio-economic backgrounds. Lasting for seven hours, this event allows teens and 'tweens' to mingle and socialize — with inevitable conflicts popping up without warning.

Now imagine that not a single law enforcement officer in the city or county is assigned to cover, patrol or police this event at all.

Every day, Boone County's SROs face an event just like this with the 19,500 students that attend the 22 schools in the county.

"A lot of schools have 1,000 or more kids — where else would you have 1,000 kids and no police officer present?" asked Kentucky Association for School Resource Officers President Richard Kirby, who also serves as a school resource officer in Warren County.

The answer most would give is a resounding, "nowhere." Numerous law enforcement agencies and communities across the commonwealth have realized the need for school resource officers in their schools.

Not only do the schools across the state contain a major populace of their communities, they also directly reflect the demographic make up of each community in which they are situated.

"The SRO program is the true meaning of community oriented policing because we are dealing with not only kids, but parents and grandparents," said Nicholasville Officer James Howard, one of four SROs that serve in Nicholasville schools. "[We] come in contact on a daily basis with more people in our community than the rest of the community services division put together. It's the ultimate form of community oriented policing — it's where it really is at."

Boone County Maj. Michael Hall agreed. Hall supervises the eight SROs assigned to schools in Boone County.

"We feel like we are fulfilling an obligation to the schools and the community by being [in the schools]," he said.

With the number of students in many schools across the state, each school takes on an identity all its own.

"Each one of these campuses is like its own little community," Hall said. "They have the principal who's the mayor and that's what it's all about."

"We see that thin blue line where the police are here and everybody else is over there," said Madisonville Capt. Wade Williams. "This [program] is one avenue that we try to tear through that line and say it has to be a community effort. If they say they're going to do community oriented policing, then they have to do what they say and put a community officer in and make him part of this community."

Like any community, though administrators keep things running, they need the assistance of law enforcement to keep people safe.

"These administrators have so many responsibilities and so many things to do, and it's about education with them," said Boone

County SRO Ben Booher. "So, me being here frees up a lot of their time to deal with the stuff that they need to deal with and allows me to deal with the stuff they don't really need to be dealing with."

WHAT'S THE APPROACH?

Created in 1998, the Kentucky Center for School Safety has helped guide the successful placement and use of school resource officers through encouraging a triad approach — law enforcement officer, counselor and instructor, said Lee Ann Morrison, training coordinator for KCSS. This approach allows officers to use numerous tactics and techniques for not only enforcing school rules and laws, but also becoming a well-rounded part of the school community in order to help mold the children with which they come in contact into productive members of society.

Having SROs in schools in a law enforcement capacity greatly benefits both the agency and the schools in which they are serving.

"SRO programs are so important because they are preventative — instead of being reactive you can be proactive," Morrison said.

That proactive approach allows school officers to gain knowledge that might otherwise be inaccessible.

"I try to keep a good rapport with the students and let them know I'm here to help them keep the school safe," said Boone County SRO Kerry Curry. "If they know something is in the school I need to know about, they need to tell somebody and help me help them."

"You really reap the benefit of being proactive," Booher agreed. "I don't like taking kids home or to the sheriff's office or calling their parents; I'd rather be here laughing and

joking and having a good time with them. ... So, you work a little harder to fix the problems, and it pays off."

Not only does it pay off for the school, but it pays off for the entire department. Having SROs in the schools helps ease the burden of other road officers responding to numerous and reoccurring incidents at the schools.

"It's a great relationship," Hall said. "They've got a law enforcement presence [at the school] and if they have a criminal issue or even just a traffic issue or accident, the SRO can handle those ... instead of having a road unit redirect from his calls to come and take care of that."

But for an agency just beginning an SRO program, that benefit can be masked initially.

"The first year you have an SRO your reports go up because no one had been there to report everything prior," KCSS's Morrison said. "That can be looked at as a negative. But, in year two the numbers go back down because they have that presence in the school. They have to get over that first-year hump."

Overall, most agencies find that criminal incidents reduce in a school with an SRO, she said. Once boundaries are set and rules are laid out, officers act accordingly to send a strong message as to the consequences and repercussions that can be expected when those rules are broken.

"If I have to take the next step, I tell [students] the next time they'll go out in handcuffs, then they do and go to juvenile detention or to the sheriff's office and are picked up by mom and dad," Curry said. "If it takes more significant law enforcement action to straighten them out, then I'll do that."

VALUABLE RESOURCE

"Chiefs and sheriffs need to realize what a valuable tool they have in an SRO who is working inside the school," KASRO's Kirby said. "One reason is, in many cases they would be answering calls to a particular school if there was no SRO there."

"But it's a two-fold thing," he continued. "They begin to learn the community through >>

BOONE COUNTY SRO BEN BOOHER TALKS WITH A STUDENT DURING LUNCH IN CONNER HIGH SCHOOL'S CAFETERIA. BOOHER SAYS EATING WITH THE STUDENTS ALLOWS HIM TO BUILD RELATIONSHIPS.



PHOTO BY JIM ROBERTSON



BOONE COUNTY SRO KERRY CURRY HAS BEEN IN LAW ENFORCEMENT FOR NEARLY 35 YEARS, BUT STILL KNOWS HOW TO RELATE TO THE STUDENTS IN HIS CHARGE AT CONNER MIDDLE SCHOOL.

PHOTO BY JIM ROBERTSON

>> the students in the school and can assist other law enforcement officers working the street through knowledge gained from working in the schools.”

That first-hand knowledge, when handed over to investigators, can potentially be the link that makes or breaks a case.

“I help the [officers] on the street a lot with information that kids give me when they come in and talk,” said Madisonville SRO Bob Couchman.

Couchman has a separate phone line he allows students to use at any time of day or night to leave voicemails or texts about issues, problems or information they feel they need to share with him.

“Our program worked great as an intelligence gathering tool once the kids really began to trust us,” said Nicholasville SRO Sam Wade. “Kids will pull us aside . . . and tell information about crimes happening in the community that we pass along to our detectives to help them solve cases.”

Nicholasville SRO Jacob Jones recalled a situation where the information gathered at school made all the difference in what would have been a dead-end case. There was a 13-year-old girl who was suspected to be in a relationship with a 30-year-old man. When patrolmen were sent to her house she refused to talk to them, and at that point, they were stuck, Jones said. Then one of the girl’s friends came and talked to Jones and a school counselor about a friend she was worried about who was in a relationship with a 30-year-old man. With the information gathered from the friend, Jones was able to bypass the victim and go straight to the perpetrator who gave him more information on the relationship.

“I did the entire investigation based off intel from her friend, and in the matter of an afternoon the guy was sitting behind bars,” Jones said. “If I was a patrolman, I would have been stuck because I wouldn’t have recognized who her friends were.”

Instances like this case in Nicholasville are only possible because of positive relationships that these SROs form while working in their schools. The foundation of a successful SRO program is in the relationships built between the students and the school administrators.

Building a relationship between the officer and school administrators and allowing the officer to have a specific place in the school environment is crucial to getting an SRO program off the ground in any school district, Morrison said.

“The most useful [SROs] are the ones invited into the school environment,” she said. “They are in the schools every day. We encourage that the SRO have an office, a computer and his or her place in the school.”

But once an SRO is in the school environment, he or she must work with the school administrators to define each party’s role in the relationship.

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— MADISONVILLE SRO
BOB COUCHMAN

administrators,” Boone County’s Hall said. “They know we work with them but we work for the sheriff’s office. There is a fine line there. The SROs cannot be used as their administrators. We’ll be glad to help in whatever aspect we can, but there is a fine line there.”

Much of the success that has been seen at Madisonville-North Hopkins High School is because of teamwork and collaboration.

“The school administration, the court system and me all working together — we’ve built one heck of a team, I think,” Couchman said. “From the top of the school system to the principal, to the

superintendent, we are in constant communication. We want to know what is going on and when it is addressed. Without that team, I don’t know how it would work.”

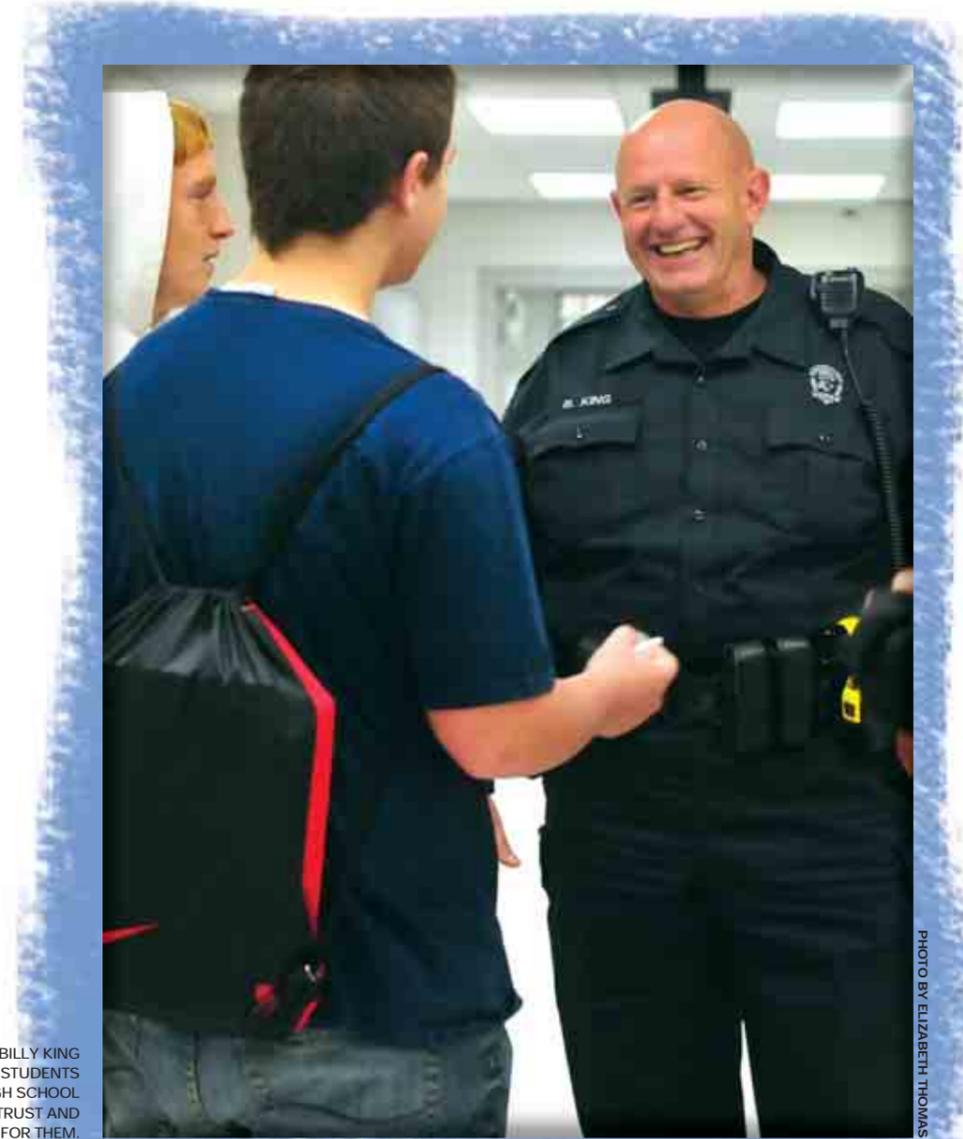
The KCSS strongly encourages that officer-school administrator relationship.

“The programs that I don’t see as successful are the ones where no one knows who the [officer] is,” explained Morrison. “He parks his cruiser in front of the school, goes in the library and sits and reads the paper until someone calls him. That’s not a successful program. Everyone should know who he is and why he’s there, including the staff. >>



MADISONVILLE SRO BOB COUCHMAN FOSTERS RELATIONSHIPS WITH STUDENTS HANGING OUT WITH THEM AT LUNCH, CUTTING UP AND SWAPPING STORIES.

PHOTO BY ELIZABETH THOMAS



NICHOLASVILLE SRO BILLY KING ENJOYS TALKING WITH STUDENTS AT EAST JESSAMINE HIGH SCHOOL IN ORDER TO BUILD TRUST AND BECOME A SAFE HAVEN FOR THEM.

PHOTO BY ELIZABETH THOMAS

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 BILLY KING



>> “That can happen because an SRO is forced into the role and the administration doesn’t know what to do with him when he is there,” she continued. “The best programs are planned out partnerships between the law enforcement agency and the school district in which they can decide together how to use this position.”

KCSS offers free technical support to struggling SRO programs to help them figure out how to best use their SROs in the school environment, Morrison said.

‘A SAFE ZONE’

But perhaps even more important to an SRO’s long-term success is the relationship he or she builds with students day in and day out.

“You have an opportunity to make a difference in a lot of these kids’ lives, whereas on the street you would never really get the chance,” said Nicholasville SRO Billy King about why he enjoys being an SRO. “Here, you see them on a daily basis. You can build a relationship with them and try to keep them on track before it’s too late and before it gets to the point where you have to deal with me in a reactive state instead of proactive.”

Keeping an open door of communication between the resource officer and the students can deter many incidents from ever occurring.

“Our philosophy is if we can hear something then we can do something before it happens,” said Manchester SRO Jeff Collett. “You would be surprised what kids will come and tell you. Somebody’s going to tell it if they know it.”

Because of the nature of their jobs, SROs often get the most time to build relationships with the students that cause the most trouble.

“It is a very small percentage of students that I have to deal with,” Boone County’s Booher said. “I don’t like to deal with the students I have to deal with, I like dealing with the students that I want to deal with. I’d much rather attend the basketball games and the football games and walk around the hallways and have good face-to-face time with the students. That’s rewarding for me and probably serves them well also.”

“The more people I have a decent relationship with, the fewer students are causing problems,” he continued. “When I develop relationships with troubled students, they don’t want to disappoint me — just like a good kid doesn’t want to disappoint a good parent.”

It is that philosophy of taking a child under their wing that allows them to serve as role models and change the lives of children.

“You can’t hide from these kids — they find you,” Nicholasville’s James Howard said. “Even on the street or in Wal-Mart when you’re not in uniform, these kids see right through that and recognize you. ...It’s both good and bad, but it shows you how effective you have been and what a positive role model you have been in kids’ lives.”

In today’s society, many SROs realize how important it is to provide young people with a positive role model. In the midst of students’ difficult backgrounds and home situations, an SRO can offer them a safe haven to bring their problems, issues and frustrations.

“I call this a safe zone because kids these days have an anger-management problem,”

said Boone County SRO Rick White. “I don’t want them to look at me as the enemy, so I’ll let kids come in [my office], shut the door and let them punch chairs and scream as long as they don’t break anything or try to hurt me.”

“If they scream and cuss and yell, that’s ok — it gets it out of their system,” he continued. “Because out in the hallway is where it will get them into trouble.”

As relationships grow, often the students’ stories begin to hit home for an SRO.

“Any of the abuses — when you’re close to a kid and they start to pour out their soul, it is a hard one to swallow sometimes,” Nicholasville’s Jones said. “Everyone has a soft place in their heart for children, but when you get to know the kids and their backgrounds and they come and tell you what’s going on, it can be difficult. It will mentally challenge you to say the least.”

Nicholasville’s Howard agreed.

“The kids you get attached to, when they are hurting, you are hurting too,” he said.

On the flip side, SROs can also offer children some of the attention and recognition they are lacking in their home environment.

“The kids you get close to want you in their lives, too,” Nicholasville’s Wade said. “And it may be the kids whose mom and dad won’t come to anything ever, the fact that they asked you to come (to an event) and you show up is a big deal for them. We may never get paid for it, but the fact that we can be there for that kid is a big deal.”

Naturally, by being in the schools on that ground level with students every day, school resource officers in communities across the state are making a huge impact in the lives of thousands of children in a way that few get the chance to do.

“I wanted to become an SRO because for me it was feeling like [I couldn’t] get ahead on the street — you don’t feel like you are actually making a difference out there when you’ve been doing this as long as I have,” said Howard who has worked as an officer for 13 years. “I just wanted to feel like those I was working with, whether it was positive or negative, I was making a big difference in their lives.”

Making a difference starts with changing the concept of a law enforcement officer for many kids. If a child’s experience has been the police coming to their home and taking mom or dad to jail and he or she leaves with social services, that leaves them with the impression that the police are the bad guys, Madisonville’s Sgt. Robert Carter said.

“We are tearing that down,” Carter said. “We now have young people who remember us from their kindergarten classes and DARE graduations and the other opportunities we’ve had that have been good, so when we see them walk across the stage on graduation night, leaving here and going to college, we are getting the thank yous — ‘you believed in me when no one else would. If it had not been for you I wouldn’t have made it.’”

Most SROs agree that it is the success stories that make their job worthwhile.

“It is touching to go to those graduations and see the kids coming across the stage,” Nicholasville’s King said. “I’m shaking hands or passing out hugs, and to know that I played a role in helping to get some of them to that point, really gives you a warm feeling.”

Though being an SRO is not a position that all officers would want to do or be successful in, for the more than 220 resource officers across Kentucky, it is a position they have come to respect and deeply appreciate.

“I talk to a lot of officers who have been in the job as long as me, and they say they are burnt out,” said Boone County’s Curry, a 34-year law enforcement veteran. “But when I started working in the schools, it rejuvenated me. I enjoy working with the kids.”

“You actually have the ability to come to work and have a good day,” King agreed. “It’s not destined that it’s going to be all bad from the time you hit the clock. Normally there are things we have to deal with. But, I can honestly say there are days that I come to work and do absolutely nothing but have a good time with the kids. The chance to be able to have that makes it really nice coming to work.”

“It may be a day where you have to arrest a student or bring criminal charges, but it is not a given like on patrol,” King continued. >>

FINDING THE FUNDS

ABBIE DARST |
 PROGRAM COORDINATOR

Funding is the biggest challenge facing Kentucky’s school resource officer programs. Since the most effective programs have multiple SROs to meet the needs of the school district, when programs take funding hits or SROs have to be cut because of budget issues, the repercussions affect the school district, students and the department, said Lee Ann Morrison, training coordinator for the Kentucky Center for School Safety.

There are numerous ways that an agency can get creative to help ease the financial burden associated with carrying an active SRO program. In Boone County, retired law enforcement officers were hired into SRO positions, eliminating the need to provide benefits. Their SROs are also on nine-month contracts, having the summer off, to reduce cost to the department, Morrison explained.

Other departments split the cost with the school district with the understanding that the SROs go back to road duties during summer months.

In Nicholasville, when Maj. John Branscum pushed for the program, they ran into funding issues. In their case, the city of Nicholasville, the fiscal court and the school board equally fund the city’s SRO program, which supports four officers in the city’s two middle schools and two high schools.

“A lot of counties across Kentucky would love to have [an SRO], but simply can’t afford it,” said Kentucky Association of School Resource Officers President Richard Kirby, who is also a Warren County SRO. “That’s the sad part of it, is that it is between money and safety.”

Besides looking into different grant options to help fund SRO programs, agencies can also call the city administrator’s attention to the benefits the program provides the community to help them better understand the program’s purpose and effectiveness.

“We started our program on a community-oriented police services grant, and when we lost that funding, we thought the program would expire,” Kirby said. “Not a lot of planning went into keeping the program going. After a few weeks, the superintendent’s phone started ringing off the hook with parents who were tuned into and liked the idea of having an SRO and said they wanted us back.” ■

MANCHESTER SRO JEFF COLLETT HAS SERVED CLAY COUNTY SCHOOLS FOR MORE THAN TWO YEARS. COLLETT’S PRESENCE IN CLAY COUNTY HIGH SCHOOL ALLOWS HIM TO SHOW STUDENTS A DIFFERENT SIDE OF LAW ENFORCEMENT AND MAKE A POSITIVE IMPACT THROUGH HIS INTERACTION WITH STUDENTS EACH DAY.



PHOTO BY ELIZABETH THOMAS

>> “On patrol you know what you’re going to be doing. You’re going to be taking theft reports, working accidents, looking at blood, fighting with someone, dealing with a drug head or an alcoholic. Here, there is a chance that you’re going to have a good day and you’re going to be able to talk to some kids, laugh, cut up and have a good time.”

In a sometimes thankless job, to have a student let their SRO know what an impact they made in their life makes them feel like it truly is worth showing up every day, Wade said.

“That’s the best part of the job — as opposed to a street officer throwing a guy in jail all the time — we get to get out there, hopefully, before those problems occur and prevent some stuff from going on,” Madisonville’s Couchman said. “That’s what this is all about to me.”

THE INSTRUCTOR ROLE

The third triad of a successful SRO program is the instructor role. This role can take on

numerous forms in different schools, depending on the school’s structure and the personality of the SRO, but is still an important role to fulfill, said KCSS’s Morrison.

KCSS research shows that more resource officers are getting into the role of teaching than they were eight or nine years ago, through a myriad of avenues. In some districts, the health class will bring in the officer to talk about drug prevention. Some do after-school programs, others do assembly speaking, while some put on specific programs, such as GREAT or gang resistance education and training in the schools each week, Morrison said.

“We’ll do classroom presentations on juvenile law or anything really,” King said. “We actually make more contacts and reach more students that way.”

Many officers fulfill the instructor role through impromptu class presentations where a teacher will catch them walking through the halls and ask them to come in and speak on a specific topic.

“They are very well rounded because they have been officers for a long time,” Boone County’s Hall said. “They fall back on their training and knowledge from the past as situations come up.”

Some resource-officer programs have taken the role a step further and actually provide specific programs to students and the surrounding community.

In Nicholasville, the SROs began leading a rape aggression defense or RAD program for the female student population. Nationally recognized by colleges as a self-defense program, it was developed with the idea that women need to protect themselves against rape.

“We wanted to do something that was novel that no one had done before and this program jumped out,” Wade said. “It’s really been an opportunity for us to connect with our female students.”

Nicholasville officers try to offer the class during school down times such as fall and spring break and have seen great benefits since its inception.

“We’ve been able to empower those young ladies, give them the confidence it takes, the knowledge it takes — not only with precautionary things and awareness, but if it comes down to it, they can fight their way out of a dangerous situation,” Wade said.

Madisonville’s program focus is on sexting, cyberbullying and the dangers of the Internet and social media.

“For us it was trial by fire,” Carter said. “We were thrown into it by a case. We had a case that was bad — it was beyond bad; it was a parent’s worst nightmare.”

The Madisonville police had been teaching classes to adults for nearly five years on Internet and technology safety, but realized they had left out the most important part — young people, Carter said.

“We didn’t think that the issues we were talking about with adults would be affecting our young people the way they were,” he said. “... A lot of young people fail to realize the choices and decisions that can be made in the private security of one’s home can have a direct impact and affect them on a level they can never get back.

“With innocence comes a sense of danger,” he continued.

After a profuse amount of research and planning, Madisonville’s Carter and Couchman began teaching Internet safety to children of all ages, using programs from the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children such as Clicky and NetSmartz.

Quickly they were hammered by different counties calling for their assistance, and they would share what they learned from their experiences. They have now been teaching these classes for about six years.

“We will do the same thing for one that we will do for 1,000 — whether in schools, in the community or across the state, we are going to educate,” Carter said.

There is no doubt that the job of an SRO is varied, interesting, difficult and uniquely rewarding. They have been given the opportunity to directly impact the lives of the next generation of moms, dads and community leaders, while making their lives and their schools better today.

“It’s a little bit safer, a little bit nicer place — that’s the way you like to leave it when you go,” Boone County’s White said. “It’s a little better than when I found it.”

“From having been in the schools, I see the calmness and assurance students and staff have with a police officer being in the building,” Warren County’s Kirby said. “It provides a better learning environment. Students are not so concerned with being bullied or someone coming to school to hurt them because they know that a resource officer is there, and he is going to do whatever it takes to keep them safe.”

At the end of the day, that’s the goal of a resource officer — to make school a safe, constructive environment for students to grow, learn and become productive members of society.

“Children are the most important thing we have to protect,” Kirby said. “One of our sayings is: protecting our most valuable resource — and they truly are.” J

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Worst Case of School Violence

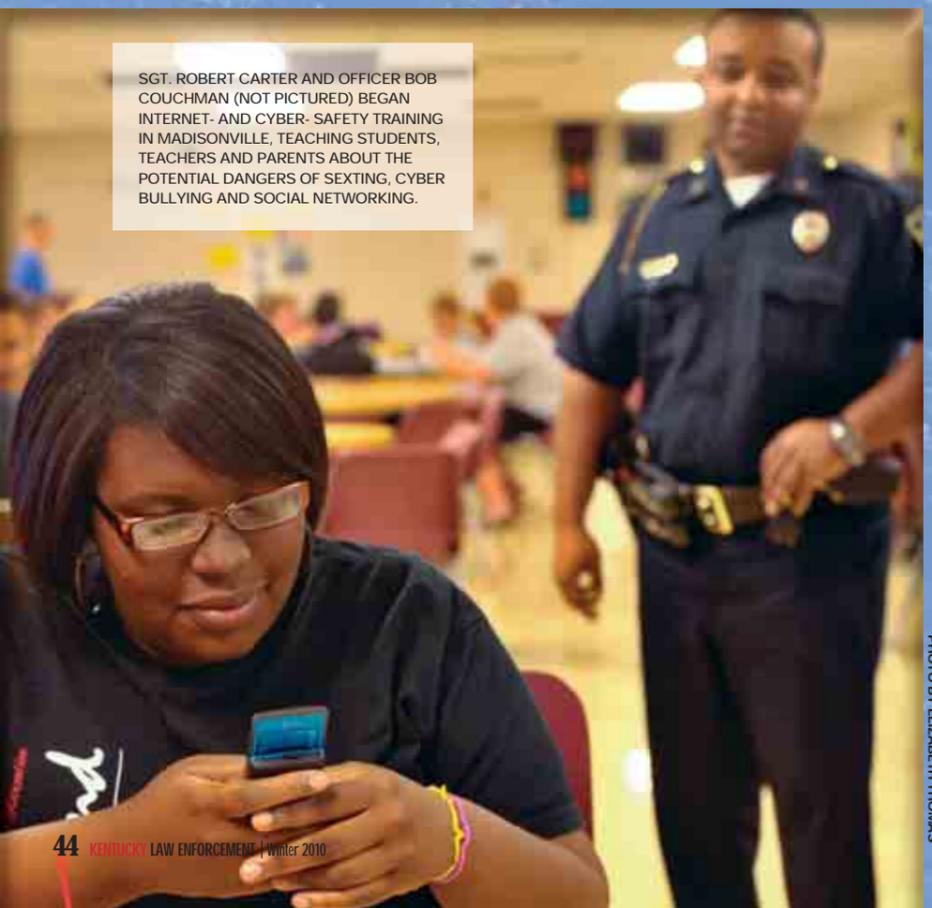
Possibly the worst act of school violence in America was not enacted by individuals carrying assault rifles or semi-automatic weapons and was well before the idea of school violence was prevalent in the minds of society.

In Bath, Mich. on May 18, 1927, Andrew Kehoe age 55, disgruntled over a school tax, blew up a local school, killing 45 people, including 38 children.

Kehoe worked as a volunteer at the school and on the day of the bombing he repaired a door at the school and greeted children as they arrived. Throughout the year, Kehoe, who was furious about a tax issue for the school, had brought in small packages of dynamite and placed them throughout the school. That afternoon, he detonated the dynamite destroying the greater portion of the school. After the explosion, 500 pounds of dynamite were discovered that had not been detonated. Forty-three children suffered serious injuries and 100 others were treated for shock, burns and cuts. ■



PHOTOS SUBMITTED



SGT. ROBERT CARTER AND OFFICER BOB COUCHMAN (NOT PICTURED) BEGAN INTERNET- AND CYBER- SAFETY TRAINING IN MADISONVILLE, TEACHING STUDENTS, TEACHERS AND PARENTS ABOUT THE POTENTIAL DANGERS OF SEXTING, CYBER BULLYING AND SOCIAL NETWORKING.

PHOTO BY ELIZABETH THOMAS

ON THE OUTS

ABBIE DARST | PROGRAM COORDINATOR

Even though building positive relationships is a must in a good school resource officer program, for many SROs across the commonwealth, building relationships at their respective schools comes at the cost of losing ties with the rest of their department. Often, because of the separation from the department as a whole, resource officers can feel isolated and out of touch with department happenings.

“The hardest part for me is the separation from everybody else,” Nicholasville SRO James Howard said. “You are a one-man unit and every decision is made by you and you alone and rests on your shoulders.”

Unfortunately, it is the nature of the job, since SROs serve five days a week, nine months of the year at their assigned schools — it leaves little time for them to

even get to the department, much less form any bonds with other officers at the agency.

“We put in a minimum of 40 hours on school property, not to mention every week there is something, if not four things, that are keeping us past 40,” Nicholasville SRO Billy King said. “So for us to have interaction at the department as well is like pulling teeth — it is impossible to find the time because we are so busy on site.

“That’s not the way we want it or prefer it to be, but that’s just the way it is because there is such high demand for our time here on site,” King continued. “Because the kids are what we’re here for. If that’s what it takes, that is what we are going to give.”

However, the large volume of time spent at school is not only with students, but staff as well, allowing SROs to build camaraderie and friendships with school administrators.

“I’ve been able to develop relationships with coaches and our families will go to dinner together and I enjoy being around them,” Boone County SRO Ben Booher said. “They become like coworkers, like it was with other officers at the department.”

In addition, some officers like the autonomy that the position allows them.

“I like the independence that comes with it,” Manchester SRO Jeff Collett said. “It’s kind of like being your own boss. You know what you’re supposed to be doing and you don’t have somebody looking right over you. And if something happens in the school system, I’m going to know about it.”

Though there are sacrifices that come with the SRO position, many officers are willing because they see the benefits for the students and the community.

“If these guys didn’t care as much as they did,” Boone County Maj. Michael Hall said, “this program wouldn’t be as successful.” J



NICHOLASVILLE SRO JAMES HOWARD INTERACTS WITH STUDENTS TO HELP FOSTER RELATIONSHIPS THAT PROVE INVALUABLE IN HIS POSITION AT EAST JESSAMINE MIDDLE SCHOOL.

PHOTO BY ELIZABETH THOMAS



PHOTO BY ELIZABETH THOMAS

NICHOLASVILLE OFFICER BILLY KING, LIKE MANY SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICERS ACROSS THE STATE, OFTEN PROVIDE IMPROMPTU CLASSROOM PRESENTATIONS AND DISCUSSIONS WHEN ASKED BY TEACHERS.

Early in the week of SRO training, officers are instructed on classroom presentations, and on the last day of class, each officer has to give a presentation to the class on a topic of their choosing.

Other topics covered include critical incidents and the SRO, which focuses on school safety and security. There are also four hours spent on the 1999 shooting at Columbine High School and the Beslan school massacre where Islamic extremists seized a school in Russia leaving 350 dead, including 160 children in 2004.

In addition to DOCJT’s training, SROs can attend the National Association of School Resource Officers basic training course. The NASRO course is similar to DOCJT’s in that it explains the triad approach to the SRO position — law enforcement officer, counselor, and teacher. However, NASRO has a section of its training specifically geared toward the role of counselor or problem solver and includes discussions on child abuse, adolescent stress, dysfunctional families and working with children with special needs.

Once an SRO has completed this basic training, he or she still has to meet the 40-hour advanced individual training mandate each year.

Some classes that prove useful for SROs in their school roles are:

- Child abuse investigations
- Domestic violence
- Any firearms related training
- Interviewing and interrogation
- Anything related to social networking sites. J

TRAINING FOR SUCCESS

ABBIE DARST | PROGRAM COORDINATOR

There are approximately 222 school resource officers serving in schools across the commonwealth — working day in and day out with thousands of juveniles in situations and scenarios that vary not just day to day, but minute to minute. Proper training for these men and women is a must.

For about 12 years, the Department of Criminal Justice Training has taught a 40-hour block of instruction for SROs. Though it is an SRO basic class, over the years the basic and advanced classes were combined, allowing for two days of basic and three days of advanced SRO training in a single course.

SRO training begins with a three-hour block on community policing in schools, since SRO programs are one of the best methods of implementing community-oriented policing, said Jim McKinney, DOCJT instructor for SRO training. During this block, he emphasizes

partnerships and problem-solving and discusses the history of the SRO program.

Two other major aspects of the training are legal training and classroom presentation skills, which can go hand-in-hand. Not only do SROs receive training on various legal issues regarding how to deal with juveniles and what they are allowed to do in the school setting, some of the legal training acts as a refresher for impromptu presentations officers may be asked to provide during the school day.

Classroom presentations can be a part of an SRO’s duties, whether that includes set presentations on specific topics or being pulled out of the hallway for a spur-of-the-moment presentation to assist a teacher on a given topic. For example, officers may be asked to talk to a math class about accident reconstruction or a civics class on the constitution, the Fourth Amendment or search and seizure, McKinney explained.

Standard of Excellence

ABBIE DARST | PROGRAM COORDINATOR

Kentucky school resource officers are building quite a reputation across the country. Three of the past four national SROs of the year have been from Kentucky. The National Association of School Resource Officers is the largest school-based police organization in the United States, with a membership of more than 6,000 officers from all over the country — so for Kentucky to take the top honor three nearly-consecutive years is a huge deal that cannot be ignored.

Their dedication and commitment to and care and concern for the safety of students and staff and their overall well being are what make the commonwealth's SROs stand out from the rest of the country.

For Daviess County Dep. Russ Day, the 2009 NASRO winner and Berea Police Officer James 'Doty' Harris, 2010 NASRO winner, the testimonies given for their award nominations speak volumes of the impact they have had on not only their school, but their community as well.

Kentucky statutes define an SRO as a sworn law enforcement officer who has specialized training to work with youth at a school site. SROs serve in a variety of roles, including law enforcement officer, law-related educator, problem-solver and community liaison, according to the Kentucky Center for School Safety. However, day in and day out, these men exhibited a sense of duty and a concern for the students that was "above and beyond" their job description, responsibilities or expectations.

Specifically stationed at Daviess County High School, SRO Russ Day and his drug dog, Abby have been keeping the schools in Daviess County safe for nearly seven years. Day was instrumental in implementing procedures and plans designed to identify and mitigate threats to the security of the schools. His work also included the development of a comprehensive resource that would be invaluable in a crisis situation and is now available for law enforcement agencies throughout the county.

But one of the most important aspects of a successful SRO is his or her ability to form positive, meaningful relationships with students.

"Day is always available and willing to talk with students and has earned a reputation as a friend who cares about the safety and well-being of our kids," stated Tom Shelton, Daviess County Public Schools superintendent in his recommendation letter for Day. "Our

students feel comfortable in sharing information about issues of concern with him."

Day's K-9 Abby undoubtedly has helped bring about this level of comfort for students.

"Abby . . . also helps kids become closer to Russ," Daviess County High School Principal Matthew Constant stated. "It is amazing to see students who love animals come up and make

friends with Abby and have a side conversation with Russ at the same time. With all this relationship-building groundwork, it is not uncommon for these same students to approach Russ with safety tips."

Relationships are the core of any good SRO program because they build trust, camaraderie and a sense of security for the students. These traits are imperative in fulfilling the community-oriented policing aspect of an SRO.

But for Day, his job extends further than just the typical 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. school day and further than all the after school functions and sporting events he attends. His commitment to the students flows into their home lives and the conditions they face before they even make it into the school building each day.

In many of his recommendation letters, Day was commended for his collaboration with social services, court designated worker's office and school counselors to help a pregnant student who was living in a single-wide trailer with 10 other people. The trailer had no beds and the conditions were horrible. After making several phone calls, Day was successful in his efforts to find the student a more suitable place to live and remove her from the situation.

BEREA OFFICER JAMES "DOTY" HARRIS WAS CHOSEN TO BE THE GRAND MARSHAL IN MADISON SOUTHERN HIGH SCHOOL'S HOMECOMING PARADE. THE SIX YEARS HARRIS SPENT IN THE SCHOOLS HAS EARNED HIM THE RESPECT AND ADMIRATION OF STUDENTS AND STAFF.



PHOTO BY ELIZABETH THOMAS

HARRIS RECEIVED HIS PLAQUE FOR THE 2010 NATIONAL SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICER OF THE YEAR AWARD AT THE SCHOOL DURING A SPECIAL ASSEMBLY IN SEPTEMBER. HE HAD MISSED THE ORIGINAL CEREMONY IN LOUISVILLE DUE TO A SEVERE ILLNESS.



PHOTO BY ELIZABETH THOMAS

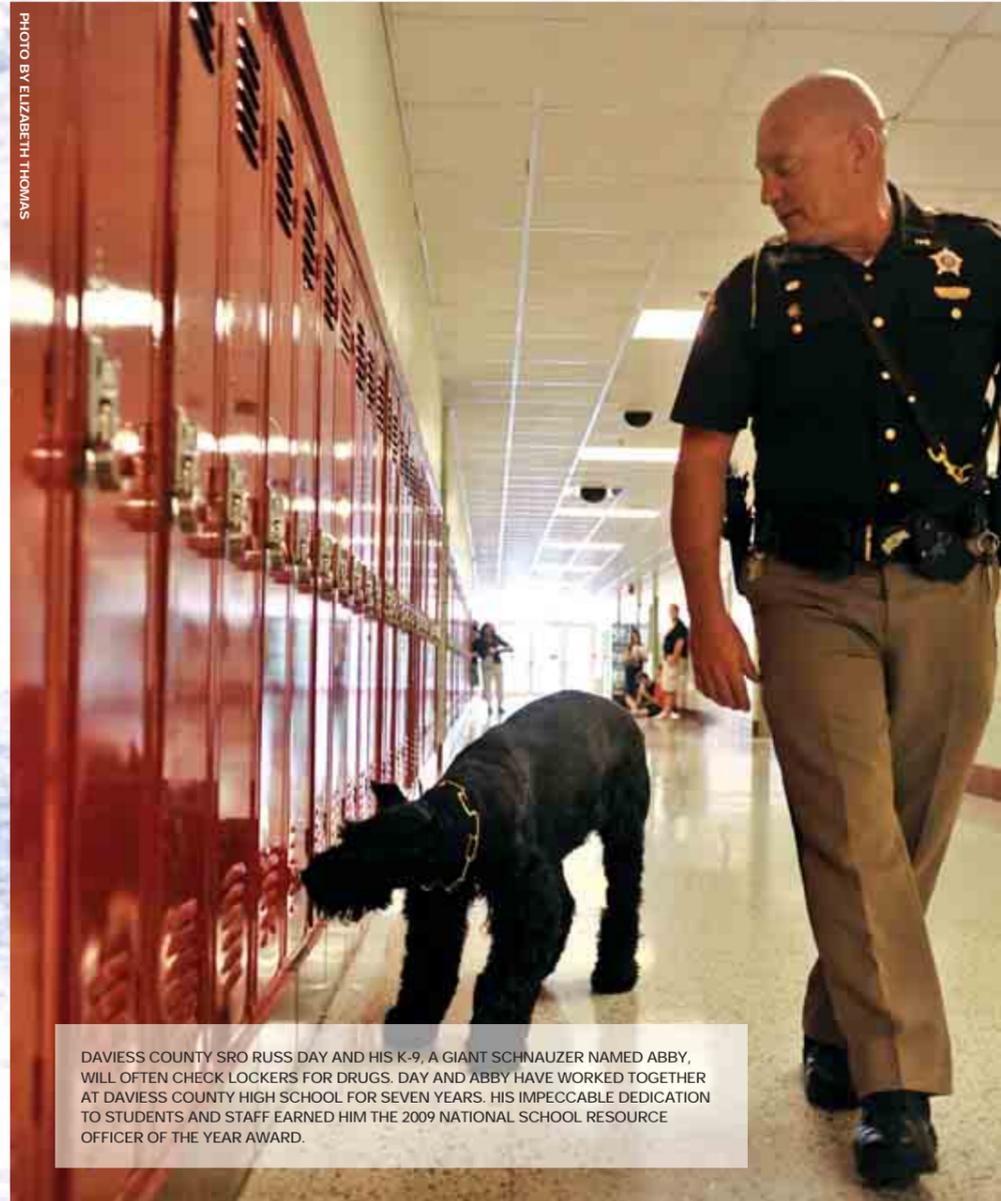


PHOTO BY ELIZABETH THOMAS

DAVIESS COUNTY SRO RUSS DAY AND HIS K-9, A GIANT SCHNAUZER NAMED ABBY, WILL OFTEN CHECK LOCKERS FOR DRUGS. DAY AND ABBY HAVE WORKED TOGETHER AT DAVIESS COUNTY HIGH SCHOOL FOR SEVEN YEARS. HIS IMPECCABLE DEDICATION TO STUDENTS AND STAFF EARNED HIM THE 2009 NATIONAL SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICER OF THE YEAR AWARD.

"This was not something he had to do," Constant stated. "It just proves that Russ' heart for helping kids is alive and well."

"The love that Deputy Day has for the students of Daviess County is evident every day," stated Trey Pippin, a student at Daviess County High School. "He takes the time to greet students when he sees them walking down the hallways and is never too busy to say 'hello' if someone pokes their head into his office."

This same servant's heart and commitment to the safety and well being of students exudes from Berea Police Department Officer James 'Doty' Harris as well. Harris is the 2010 NASRO SRO of the Year. The impact he has had on the students and staff at Madison Southern High School and Foley Middle School is unparalleled.

Described as professional while approachable, Harris, whose retirement was pending at the time of publication due to an unexpected illness, was highly visible throughout the school and at nearly every school function, many said. Everybody knew who he was and knew he meant business.

"His understanding of people and his connection to them created sound relationships between students, teacher and parents," State Rep. Harry Moberly, Jr. stated in a recommendation letter. "He accomplishes this task with a great spirit of heart and a compassionate soul — he wins over even the most problematic students."

A peek around Harris' office will tell you that his job is all about the kids.

"I didn't put anything in there — didn't need anything in there," Harris said. "If you have all that stuff in an office, kids come in and first thing they want to do is pick up stuff, they want to look at it, they want to get off

the subject that you're trying to talk about. Well, if you don't have anything in there, then they have to talk about what you're there to talk about."

But after 30 years of law enforcement service, and five as an SRO, Harris knows a thing or two about how to command respect while putting people at ease.

"He is an honorable man . . . (who) truly loves his job," Kourtney Chrisman, a Madison Southern student stated. "Not only does he love his job, but he loves the children he protects and I believe he would do anything to make sure we are safe and happy at school."

"Officer Harris is someone I would compare to a guardian angel. He's always around when you need him and he keeps our school safe," she continued.

Harris took the extra time to take notice of a particular freshman who always walked with her head down in the hallways and would look at him but not speak when he spoke to her. Knowing the student and her mother, who was also a teacher at the nearby middle school, he approached her mother with concerns that the girl was being bullied.

"I was able to talk with [her] and prevent some potential problems all because Officer Harris cared," stated Lora Smith, the girl's mother.

Smith also recalled Harris' calming and patient manner with one of the special-needs children in her class who sometimes has bad days.

"He can get her to respond when no one else can," she stated. "He is obviously a comfort to the child."

The commonwealth is fortunate to boast of numerous school resource officers who not only serve their schools and community in a professional manner, but continually go beyond the call of duty and give of themselves sacrificially for the sake of the students in their charge. The NASRO SROs of the Year — Kenny Collins, now retired from the Calloway County Sheriff's Office (2007); Day (2009) and Harris (2010) — are prime examples of the caliber of officers that have been selected to serve in the vital role of school resource officer. And in turn, schools across the commonwealth are safer, communities are reaping the benefits and students' lives are changing because of the men and women who stand in the gap, setting a standard of excellence for policing Kentucky's schools. J

School Surveillance: A Failing Grade?

JAMES CARELESS | GOVERNMENT
VIDEO MAGAZINE, JUNE 30, 2010

In the past 10 years, 284 people have been killed in U.S. school-associated violent deaths. Of those, 130 were shot; others were stabbed, beaten to death or committed suicide. In response to these tragedies, many schools have beefed up their security procedures, including adding or upgrading school video surveillance systems.

"Use of video surveillance by schools spiked following the Columbine High School attack in 1999," said Kenneth S. Trump. He is President of National School Safety and Security Services, which operates www.SchoolSecurity.org, an independent consulting firm based in Cleveland, Ohio. "The Columbine attack sent shockwaves through the education community and forced schools to try to play catch-up with decades of neglect in the most basic security and emergency preparedness measures. Security technology was one of multiple pieces of the puzzle many school districts incorporated into their beefed up security programs."

This said, the current state of U.S. school video surveillance can only be described as chaotic. "There are no across-the-board minimum standards or a common approach to school video surveillance from school board to school board, or even school to neighboring school," said Chuck Hibbert, president of Hibbert Safe School Consulting in Indianapolis. "Moreover, parents are frequently resistant to the notion of making their schools more secure; even parents who work in secured environments in their jobs."

"While video surveillance technology continues to evolve and advance, the resources for schools to tap into this technology have not kept pace," Trump said. "In fact, funding for school security has been on a decline in recent years and has especially been gutted this year due to the massive cuts in education budgets."

WHAT'S POSSIBLE

Theoretically, K-12 schools have access to the same level of sophisticated video

surveillance currently being used in government, university and business settings. This means that it is now possible for a school to install a network of cameras in and outside of their facilities, providing complete coverage of all rooms, hallways, entrances and outdoor areas. All of this coverage can be routed to a central surveillance center that is staffed 24/7, and recorded onto digital video recorders for easy access, archiving, and retrieval.

Such systems can start small and integrate legacy equipment, said Mike Haldas, who owns CCTV Camera Pros in Boynton Beach, Fla.

"IP-based and analog CCTV-based surveillance systems can be used in school systems," he said. "Both solutions are very sophisticated and all a school system to grow over time. For example, they can start with an eight-camera system and grow over time to hundreds of cameras if needed."

Such systems can provide remote real-time viewing and playback on password-protected, Internet-connected PCs and mobile clients including iPhone, Android and BlackBerry.

School video surveillance integrators abound, and are capable of meeting both small and large system needs.

"We've installed full IP-based surveillance systems for schools in the U.S. and Canada, ranging in size from 32 to 400 cameras a location," said Vy Hoang,

executive vice president of Sales and Marketing at i3International in Toronto, Ontario. "Many have directly connected their camera systems to provide access to local police, so that SWAT teams can see what's happening during a lockdown."

That's just the beginning: using products such as On-Net Surveillance Systems' Intelligent IP Video Delivery Solutions, a school surveillance system can automatically monitor a complete set of cameras, with the software watching for specific sequences of suspicious events and alert selected officials as needed.

"As well, we can integrate IP-based video systems with other technology such as card-swipe access," said Gadi Piran, OnSSI president and chief technology officer, based in Pearl River, N.Y. "So if two people try to go through a door using one card swipe, our system notes the discrepancy in real time and sends out an alert."

Meanwhile, SRI International has developed a two-way data radio system that allows passing police patrol cars to wirelessly log into a school's video system. Branded as Aware Mobile networks, this system uses a radio transceiver attached to the school's LAN and two-way radio cards installed in patrol laptops to make these connections happen.

"In its basic configuration, a school can provide police with a single camera view at all times," said Paul Callahan, SRI International's business development manager. "In an advanced configuration, officers can take remote control of the school's system to look around. This could be an incredible aid during lockdowns, when a shooter might be in the building."

WHAT'S HAPPENING

Clearly, the technology exists to make every school safe and secure. But the truth is that few schools have such complete systems in place.

"The ideal would be to have a staffed 24/7 central monitoring facility in each school," Hibbert said. "With the schools that I've worked with over the years, I still can count on one hand the number of schools that actually do this." Why are schools so reluctant to employ state-of-the-art video surveillance, or even surveillance equivalent to that of a local 7-11 store? One major reason is money.

"When school administrators start facing teacher lay-offs, we know security budgets will be first on the chopping block," Trump said. "And this is exactly what is occurring for this school year and into the near future."

The second problem is the attitude of school administrators; many of whom grew up in a time when school security wasn't a major public issue.

With tight budgets and constant issues to mediate between students, teachers and parents, worrying about whether their video system is working to its potential is a very low priority. "Security technology is only as strong as the weakest human link behind the technology," said Trump. "Too often we see schools throw up equipment after a high-profile incident to create the perception of increased security when, in reality, it is a lot of 'smoke and mirrors' to get parents and the media to back off. The cameras may go up, but the human element of security — training staff, examining security policies, developing and testing emergency plans — is still missing."

"Many schools have no policy about video retention," Hibbert added. "They either don't record what's happening beyond a day or two, or simply leave it on tape or the server until it is recorded over."

The third obstacle to effective school video surveillance are parents. "Unless you can get a majority of parents to get onboard — and this usually doesn't happen until something happens at the school — you won't get the support you need to fund and maintain adequate surveillance," said Hibbert.

"Achieving community consensus is the toughest part of the job." J

