



Written by [Bob Adelman](#) on September 3, 2014

Response to Uzi Accident Ignores Kids Who Use Guns Responsibly

In their reporting on the recent shooting death of firearms instructor Charles Vacca at the Last Stop gun range by a nine-year-old girl firing a fully-automatic Uzi, the major media have been quick to emphasize the danger of kids using firearms. But absent from media reporting is the fact that kids across America for years have used firearms safely and responsibly, sometimes even in defense of their own lives.



For example, less than 24 hours after the tragic accident, the *Washington Post* [reignited](#) the gun control debate by quoting Brady Campaign President Dan Gross, who declared, “It’s a terrible tragedy. It’s safe to say that it is not a responsible thing to do to let a nine-year-old have access to a machine gun.”

The *Post* cited John Wernick, co-director of the Johns Hopkins Center for Gun Policy and Research, who said that of the 591 accidental deaths by firearms in 2011, nearly one out of every five involved someone younger than 18. The paper then went on to review what it called the “loose restrictions governing certain elements of gun ownership,” and ended the article by outlining various states’ measures to restrict the use of firearms according to age.

The implication is that more restrictions on gun ownership and/or use are necessary to avoid such tragedies in the future; namely, kids should rarely be allowed to use guns.

Missing from the article, predictably, was any sort of balance. For instance, when Sam Scarmado, owner of the Last Stop gun range, was asked about previous accidents at his range, he responded:

In the last 14 years, we’ve probably had 100,000 people shoot 5 million rounds of ammunition, and of those, 1,000 to 2,000 of them were children.

We’ve never given out a Band Aid — no one’s even gotten a scratch.

Time magazine, in a rare hat tip to supporters of the Second Amendment, posted an op-ed by Dan Baum, author of *Gun Guys: A Road Trip*. Baum made the case that learning to shoot a firearm at a young age provided at least two major benefits. First, it required the young person to focus and concentrate in order to shoot safely and well:

Shooting a rifle accurately requires children to quiet their minds. Lining up the sights on a distant target takes deep concentration. Children must slow their breathing and tune in to the beat of their hearts to be able to squeeze the trigger at precisely the right moment.

Holding a rifle steady takes large-motor skills, and touching the trigger correctly takes small motor skills; doing both at once engages the whole brain.

Marksmanship is an exercise in a high order of body-hand-eye-mind coordination. It is as far from mindless electronic diversions as can be imagined.

Second, said Baum, the young person gains credibility and stature and an improved self-image by being



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given adult responsibility for the safe handling of a firearm. It's all about trust:

I trust your ability to listen and learn. I trust your ability to concentrate. I welcome you into a dangerous adult activity because you are sensible and trustworthy.

For young people accustomed to being constrained, belittled, ignored and told "no," hearing an adult call them to their higher selves can be enormously empowering. Children come away from properly conducted shooting lessons as different people, taller in their shoes and more willing to tune into what adults say.

Baum is in good company. As Thomas Jefferson wrote in 1785:

A strong body makes the mind strong. As to the species of exercises, I advise the gun. While this gives moderate exercise to the body, it gives boldness, enterprise and independence to the mind....

Let your gun therefore be your constant companion of your walks.

Missing from either commentary, however, was any mention of the ability of young people, properly trained in the safe use of firearms, to defend themselves in the face of imminent danger.

Last October, for example, a perp by the name of Stacy Jones tried to break into a home in Bryan County, Oklahoma. The only person home was a 12-year-old girl, who grabbed a gun and hid in the bathroom. After breaking down the front door, Jones began searching the house. According to Undersheriff Ken Golden, "He had worked his way all the way through the house and to the bathroom. And from what we understand, Jones was turning the doorknob when she fired through the door.... She did everything she was supposed to do and as a last resort, she did what she had to do, to protect herself."

A few years earlier, two men, one of whom had just finished serving almost seven years in prison for aggravated assault on a Baton Rouge, Louisiana, police officer, decided to knock over a residence in Port Allen. At home alone were two young children, a 10-year-old boy and an eight-year-old girl. When the criminals broke down the front door, the children ran to their mother's bedroom closet. The boy grabbed his mother's gun, and when the two intruders opened the closet door, he fired a bullet into the face of one of them. They immediately turned tail and ran, and were later arrested at a hospital where the injured man had been taken by his accomplice for treatment.

According to John Lott, author of the *The Bias Against Guns*, guns are used in self-defense or to ward off criminal threats such as these just mentioned more than two million times each year, many by pre-teens familiar with the use of firearms. It's unfortunate that, in their haste to promote their anti-gun agenda, instead of providing a fair, balanced, and useful commentary on the tragedy in Arizona last week, both *Time* and the *Washington Post* left out critical elements to a complete understanding of the accidental shooting. One of those critical elements is an understanding that, given the opportunity, young people can learn skill at arms which is frequently useful not only in the process of maturing into capable and responsible adults, but also in the case of imminent danger.

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