

FEBRUARY 2016



Violence Policy Center



“Start Them Young”

How the Firearms Industry and Gun Lobby Are Targeting Your Children

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ABOUT THE COVER

The Title

"Start Them Young" is a section head of the 2012 National Shooting Sports Foundation (NSSF) publication *Understanding Activities that Compete with Hunting and Target Shooting, 2011 Comprehensive Consumer Study, Executive Summary*. NSSF is the official trade association for the firearms industry.

The Photo

"A chilling photograph of a small boy, gnawing on a pistol clutched in his tiny hands, dressed in camouflage and with a grenade and ammunition belt in his lap, was recovered from the weapon-filled home of Sandy Hook school gunman Adam Lanza....A family friend said that Lanza and his older brother were taught to shoot almost as soon as they could hold a weapon by their mother Nancy, a gun fanatic. But a spokesman for Mrs. Lanza's ex-husband, Peter, last night denied that the child in the uncaptioned photograph was either son."

"Sandy Hook report reveals Lanza children's early exposure to guns," *The Telegraph*, December 28, 2013

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An online version of this study is available at <http://www.vpc.org/publications/start-them-young/>.

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SELECT FIREARMS INDUSTRY AND GUN LOBBY QUOTES ON MARKETING GUNS TO CHILDREN FROM THE STUDY

“If we don’t improve at cultivating new hunters and shooters, the sport we love and industry we work in will eventually die away. That’s a strong diagnosis, but a realistic one. Like many enthusiast sports in this busy, competitive world, people are leaving faster than new ones are coming in — and this is a recipe for industry-wide trouble down the road.”

“Shooting for a New Audience: Reaching New Demographics is Critical to Our Industry,”
Shooting Sports Retailer, May/June 2007 (page 5)

“If you’re a kid looking for your first rifle, this is the gun you need to tell your parents about.”

“Marlin’s New Kid-Friendly Rifles,” *NRA Family InSights*, January 2, 2014 (page 11)

“I can’t remember how old he was, exactly, when he shot his first firearm — I think he was probably 8 years old — but I know he was around 10 when he shot his first machine gun.”

“Children and Guns — An Iowa Fail,” *Jews for the Preservation of Firearms Ownership*,
April 21, 2014 (page 13)

“Lenin was famously quoted as saying ‘Give me just one generation of youth, and I’ll transform the whole world.’ With this in mind, developing the next generation in the shooting sports isn’t just a business decision: The survival of the firearms world depends on the political will of those who come after us, which is a direct result of their involvement in the shooting sports.”

“The Best Guns for Smaller Shooters,” *Shooting Sports Retailer*, April 30, 2015 (page 17)

“And of course, the problem with failing to recruit and grow is that numbers equate to political power. In an era when the private ownership and use of firearms, the right to ‘keep and bear arms,’ has come under increasing pressure, numbers and a young, vital membership are critical.”

“Is the Shooting Industry Getting it All Wrong?,” *Shooting Sports Retailer*, July 31, 2015 (page 21)

“What market isn’t tied to juniors? I really can’t think of any. Military and law enforcement firearms have civilian versions which are applicable. The Concealed Carry Weapon (CCW) market has firearms which hold 10-rounds which is the limit for IDPA [International Defensive Pistol Association] competition. When the junior turns 21 they can get a CCW permit. What do they buy? It is usually a gun from a manufacturer they are familiar with.”

“A Word from Your Editor,” Junior Shooters, Spring 2012 (page 23)

“[W]e’re talking about a tiny gun intended for the very youngest shooters — the ultimate first gun. ‘We’re targeting the six- to 12-year-old range....’ With the number of hunters declining, it’s crucial to get kids introduced to the sport as early as possible. The HotShot [youth rifle] means that even the youngest shooters now have a gun sized just for them.”

“Test Fire: Thompson/Center HotShot,” NRA Family, January 2, 2014 (page 31)

“To help hunting and target shooting get a head start over other activities, stakeholders such as managers and manufacturers should target programs toward youth 12 years old and younger. This is the time that youth are being targeted with competing activities.”

“It is important to consider more hunting and target shooting recruitment programs aimed at middle school level, or earlier.”

Understanding Activities that Compete with Hunting and Target Shooting, 2011 Comprehensive Consumer Study, Executive Summary, National Shooting Sports Foundation, 2012 (page 34)

“[Y]outh ambassadors and others should focus on getting newcomers to take a first step into target shooting through any means, whether a BB or pellet gun, paintball gun, or archery bow. The point should be to get newcomers started shooting *something*, with the natural next step being a move toward actual firearms. Initial interest, however, should be embraced in whatever form it presents itself. ”

Understanding the Impact of Peer Influence on Youth Participation in Hunting and Target Shooting, Executive Summary, Hunting Heritage Trust and National Shooting Sports Foundation, 2012 (page 35)

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INTRODUCTION

“He was just a good kid. He was everybody’s friend.”

On October 24, 2014, 14-year-old Jaylen Fryberg entered the cafeteria at Marysville-Pilchuck High School in Marysville, Washington, and shot five classmates, killing four, before turning the gun on himself. Unlike many school shooters before him, Fryberg had given little or no warning of his intentions. He was described as a popular “happy-go-lucky” kid who played sports and was recently elected as the freshman class’ prince in the school’s homecoming court.

But like many American children, he also had easy access to guns. He grew up with guns around the house, frequently went hunting with his father, and recently obtained a hunting rifle as a gift, which he called “probably the best [birthday] present ever, I just love my parents!!!” The semiautomatic 40-caliber Beretta handgun, which he used to commit the crime, was his father’s. Friends said that the teen had recently been involved in a breakup with his girlfriend and had sent disturbing messages via social media the week before the shooting.¹

“It was insane how much he knew....He would say all the types of guns and could name anything.”

On June 10, 2014, Jared Padgett, a 15-year-old freshman at Reynolds High School in Troutdale, Oregon, opened fire with a Daniel Defense M4 AR-15-style semiautomatic assault rifle in the school’s boys’ locker room, killing a classmate. He then wounded a physical education teacher before eventually turning the gun on himself. In addition to the AR-15, Padgett carried nine ammunition magazines, including 30-round magazines, a .25 Colt pistol, and a knife. All the weapons came from his family’s home.

Subsequent investigation found that Padgett showed an intense interest in guns. One classmate said that he had “showed off about the guns he had,” saying that he had “bullets at home, bullets and guns.” On Facebook, he “Liked” an M4 assault rifles page (the type of gun he used in the shooting), and a page called “We WILL NOT Be Disarmed.” Friends and classmates recalled that he talked frequently about guns. Another peer added that “it was insane how much he knew” about firearms and that he “would say all the types of guns and could name anything.” After the shooting, a close friend of Padgett’s said he was not surprised to learn that Padgett was the shooter, saying that he knew “it was him all along.”²

He had plans to kill his family, set off bombs, and “kill as many students as he could.”

John David LaDue, a 17-year-old from Waseca, Minnesota, was arrested by police after he was seen entering a storage unit in a suspicious manner on April 29, 2014, and the witness became concerned and called police. It was soon alleged that LaDue had plans to kill his family, set off bombs, and kill “as many students as he could” at Waseca Junior/Senior High School, where he was an 11th-grade honor roll student. LaDue had bombs that he had completed, bomb-making materials, as well as gunpowder in the storage unit. Inside his home, police found three improvised explosives, 400 rounds of ammunition, and seven guns. LaDue had illegally purchased a 45 caliber Llama handgun and had also stolen firearms from his father.

LaDue had a longstanding fascination with guns and famous mass shootings. Speaking to police following his arrest, LaDue admitted that he idolized previous mass shooters, such as those responsible for the 1999 Columbine High School attack, and added that he had hoped to kill more people than the 26 children and educators murdered at Sandy Hook Elementary School in 2012. He “Liked” the pages for several assault weapon models on Facebook.

LaDue’s parents seemed to approve of their son’s obsession with guns. His father confessed that “I tried to indulge him in every way that I thought was harmless,” allowing his son to keep guns in his room for deer hunting and for protecting the family when he was away on business. LaDue’s father even wore a shirt with a National Rifle Association logo to his son’s court hearing.³

This disturbing list continues on: youth who, immersed in the language, culture, and weaponry of today’s militarized gun culture, lash out, using such easily accessed firepower to right their perceived wrongs in the most violent way possible. Incidents like the ones cited above occur with what seems like almost rapid-fire regularity in America today: Children, teens, and young adults with easy access to guns pick up their weapons and use them for a homicidal purpose. Even more often, depressed teenagers use the guns to commit suicide. Young children and teens also unintentionally fire the weapons, injuring themselves or others.

The tragic frequency of shootings involving children and teenagers is well documented and unfortunately now a regular part of our daily existence. Yet few realize that the firearms industry and the organizations that represent their interests, including the National Rifle Association,⁴ have made it one of their top marketing priorities to promote the use of guns among America’s children, as young as grade-school age. In doing so, the gun industry is following a trail once blazed by the tobacco industry in its efforts to entice children to smoke cigarettes.

FOLLOWING THE TOBACCO INDUSTRY'S PATH: THE SEARCH FOR REPLACEMENT SHOOTERS

The gun industry has long understood that it faces a slow-motion demographic collapse. With the industry's customer base growing older, household gun ownership in America has steadily declined. As its primary market of white males ages and dies off, the firearms industry has set its sights on America's children. Much like the tobacco industry's search for replacement smokers, the gun industry is seeking replacement shooters to purchase its deadly products.

Firearms companies have teamed up with "corporate partners" like the National Rifle Association of America, the gun industry's trade association the National Shooting Sports Foundation (NSSF), and online publications such as *Junior Shooters* in an industry-wide effort to market firearms to kids. They do this by promoting websites and magazines targeted at children, designing "kid-friendly" guns to appeal to the youth market, and even working to create the equivalent of "'reality' video" games to encourage gun use from an early age.

The industry's focus on recruiting children into the gun culture has been acknowledged since at least the 1990s:

- A 1993 issue of NSSF's *SHOT Business* raises the question, "Kids can't buy guns, you say? Well, yes and no. It's true that most students from kindergarten through high school can't purchase firearms on their own. But it's also true that in many parts of the country, youngsters (from preteens on up) are shooting and hunting. Pop picks up the tab."⁵
- In answer to the question, "How old is old enough?" the NSSF pamphlet *When Your Youngster Wants a Gun...* (distributed by the organization up until 1994) responds: "Age is not the major yardstick. Some youngsters are ready to start at 10, others at 14. The only real measures are those of maturity and individual responsibility. Does your youngster follow directions well? Is he conscientious and reliable? Would you leave him alone in the house for two or three hours? Would you send him to the grocery store with a list and a \$20 bill? If the answer to these questions or similar ones are 'yes,' then the answer can also be 'yes' when your child asks for his first gun."



Junior Shooters, Winter 2009

When your youngster wants a gun...

far less likely to have an accident than youngsters who have had no such instruction. Unless you are personally competent to handle the instruction, an approved safety course should be prerequisite to your youngster's owning a gun.

Why do youngsters want to shoot?

Quite simply, most youngsters are interested in shooting for the same reasons they want to play football, baseball or basketball. Shooting is a challenging, enjoyable sport with deep roots in American tradition.

Competitive shooting or informal target practice are exciting and rewarding sports which can be enjoyed 12 months a year, indoors or out, individually or as part of an organized team. Shooting helps develop a youngster's self-confidence, coordination, and personal discipline.

For many youngsters, the shooting sports are particularly appealing because they do not require superior physical prowess as do so many sports. A boy or girl lacking the physical requirements to make the varsity basketball team, for example, may find himself competing shoulder to shoulder in state or national shooting championships—perhaps even the Olympics.

How old is old enough?

Age is not the major yardstick. Some youngsters are ready to start at 10, others at 14. The only real measures are those of maturity and individual responsibility. Does your youngster follow directions well? Is he conscientious and reliable? Would you leave him alone in the house for two or three hours? Would you send him to the grocery store with a list and a \$20 bill? If the answer to these questions or similar ones are "yes," then the answer can also be "yes" when your child asks for his first gun.

NSSF pamphlet *When your youngster wants a gun...*

- At the NRA's 1996 Annual Meeting in Dallas, Texas, then-President Marion Hammer introduced her 10-year-old grandson Michael, stating, "I know that when NRA reaches out and takes the hand of a child, we are touching America's future." Hammer also outlined the NRA's agenda to "invest" in America's youth, win their "hearts and minds," and ensure the organization's longevity: "I pledge to you to dedicate my term in office to

two demanding missions. One is building an NRA bridge to America's youth. The other is being fiscally far-sighted to provide for bold new programs that will teach America's children values to last a lifetime. It will be an old-fashioned wrestling match for the hearts and minds of our children, and we'd better engage our adversaries with no holds barred....If we do not successfully reach out to the next generation, then the freedom and liberty that we've lived for — and that many of our ancestors have died for — will not live beyond us."

- A New England Firearms advertisement that appeared on the cover of the September/October 1998 issue of the gun industry publication *Shooting Sports Retailer* warned, "It's not 'who your customers will be in five years.' It's 'will there be any customers left.'" The cover shows a family shooting, with the parents slowly fading away as a child aims a long gun. Inside the magazine, a full-page ad from the company warns, "Building the next generation of customers takes work and commitment. But it must be done. The greatest threat to the firearms business may not be the anti-gunners. It is a future which lacks gun owners and users due to lack of interest. In effect, [the] greatest threat we face is the lack of a future customer base for the products which we all sell. Coming to grips with this challenge is not easy but it must be done."⁶

The warnings made in the 1990s are being echoed in the new millennium. In a 2007 "Retailing Intelligence Report" column titled "Shooting for a New Audience" (subtitled "Reaching New Demographics is Critical to Our Industry") in the gun industry trade publication *Shooting Sports Retailer*, industry marketing consultant Bruce Bear warned:

"If we don't improve at cultivating new hunters and shooters, the sport we love and industry we work in will eventually die away. That's a strong diagnosis, but a realistic one. Like many enthusiast sports in this busy, competitive world, people are leaving faster than new ones are coming in — and this is a recipe for industry-wide trouble down the road."

Urging that the gun industry "Reach Out to Young Guns," Bear warns, "It's absolutely critical for us to pass a love of shooting and hunting on to the next generation," and quotes a Dallas-area gun store owner: "Many baby boomers are getting older and getting out of hunting and shooting, and we need new people to replace them." Adds Bear, "Working with kids and their parents is not only good business, it is helping families discover the fun of sharing shooting sports together."⁷

The industry's concern is easily understood looking at the demographics regarding not only hunting, but household gun ownership overall. According to the General Social Survey (GSS)⁸ conducted by the National Opinion Research Center (NORC) at the University of Chicago:

- From 1977 to 2014, the percentage of American households that reported having any guns in the home dropped by 40 percent.
- During this period household gun ownership hit its peak in 1977, when more than half (53.7 percent) of American households reported having any guns. By 2014, 32.4 percent of American households reported having any guns in the home, a drop of more than 20 percentage points.
- In 2014, less than a third of American households reported having a gun in the home.

TABLE ONE: HOUSEHOLD GUN OWNERSHIP IN THE UNITED STATES, 1973 TO 2014

Year	Percent of Adults in Households with Guns	Year	Percent of Adults in Households with Guns	Year	Percent of Adults in Households with Guns	Year	Percent of Adults in Households with Guns
1973	48.7	1985	47.9	1994	43.8	2008	35.9
1974	47.6	1987	48.5	1996	43.3	2010	32.1
1976	49.5	1988	43.1	1998	36.5	2012	34.4
1977	53.7	1989	48.7	2000	34.2	2014	32.4
1980	50.3	1990	45.4	2002	36.4		
1982	48.6	1991	43.4	2004	37.0		
1984	48.1	1993	45.4	2006	34.4		

One of the “main reasons” cited by NORC for the decline in household firearms ownership is “the decrease in the popularity of hunting.” In 1977, 31.6 percent of adults lived in a household where they, a spouse, or both were hunters (see Table Two). By 2014 this number had dropped by more than half, to 15.4 percent.⁹

TABLE TWO: THE DECLINE IN HUNTING, 1977 TO 2014

Year	Percent Households With Adult Hunters	Year	Percent Households With Adult Hunters	Year	Percent Households With Adult Hunters	Year	Percent Households With Adult Hunters
1977	31.6	1988	22.2	1996	23.1	2008	17.6
1980	28.3	1989	23.4	1998	19.3	2010	18.2
1982	26.8	1990	24.3	2000	18.7	2012	19.7
1984	26.7	1991	23.0	2002	20.2	2014	15.4
1985	26.2	1993	21.0	2004	19.4		
1987	25.5	1994	22.1	2006	17.2		

According to a survey from a 2015 National Shooting Sports Foundation marketing study, 72 percent of gun owners began hunting between the ages of six to 15 years old. After age 15, the percentages drop precipitously: 12 percent began hunting from age 16 to 20; three percent began hunting from age 21 to 25; and only six percent began hunting over the age of 25 (seven percent began hunting at age five or less). Recognizing that hunting is the primary means by which youth are introduced to guns, the focus on children is no surprise.¹⁰

The gun industry's recognition that it relies on winning the "hearts and minds" of America's children has not changed since NRA President Marion Hammer's day. What has changed is the openness with which the industry and its lobbying partners carry out this mission, the lethality of the types of firearms they are promoting, and the sophistication of their marketing efforts to children. Bolt-action rifles are being supplanted by military-style assault rifles. Six-shot revolvers have given way to semiautomatic pistols. And just as before, a constant, underlying goal of this outreach effort is to ensure not just the financial well-being of the industry, but the political viability of the pro-gun movement.

While under federal law an individual must be 18 years old to purchase a rifle and 21 years old to purchase a handgun from a Federal Firearms License (FFL, the basic federal license required to deal in firearms) holder, federal law as regards possession is far more lax. Federal law is mute on long gun possession by those under the age of 18, and while federal law ostensibly prohibits handgun possession under the age of 18, there are numerous exceptions. State law on gun possession varies by jurisdiction.



Savage 2015 catalog

DAVEY CRICKETT, LITTLE JAKE, AND THE MARLIN MAN

Many Americans would be surprised at the age at which some parents introduce their children to firearms. This was made clear in April 2013 when a two-year-old Kentucky girl was unintentionally shot and killed by her five-year-old brother with a 22 caliber rifle he had received as a birthday gift. The gun, a Crickett rifle manufactured by Keystone Sporting Arms, the self-proclaimed "leading rifle supplier in the youth market,"¹¹ is specially designed for children. On its webpage, a friendly cartoon character stepping into the Joe Camel role for the company, "Davey Crickett," holds a rifle and stands atop the company's slogan: "My First Rifle."¹² "Crickett Logo Wear" in the company's catalog includes an armed Davey Crickett Beanie Baby ("not for children under three years of age"¹³), a Davey Crickett "trading pin," and a "My First Rifle" dog tag. The company also has a promotional YouTube video for its child-sized weapons.¹⁴

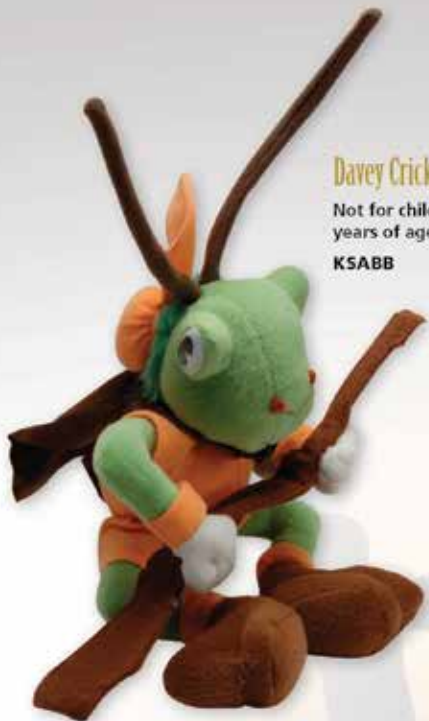
CRICKETT LOGO WEAR



Davey Crickett Hat
KSACAPS



Davey Crickett
Dog Tag
KSADT



Davey Crickett Beanie Baby
Not for children under three
years of age.
KSABB



Davey Crickett Trading Pin
KSAPINS



Davey Crickett
Zipper Pull
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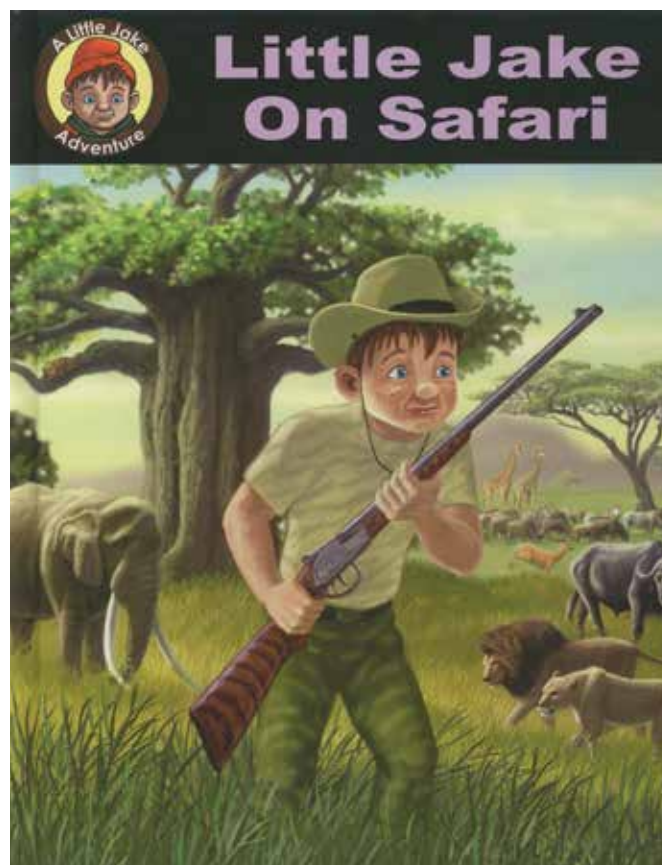
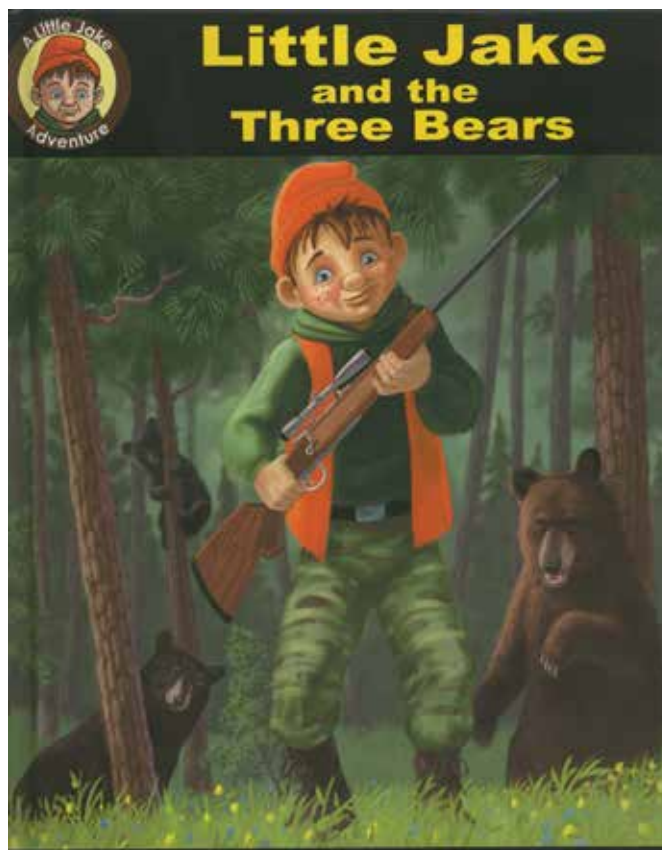
Various "Crickett Logo Wear" for children from Keystone Sporting Arms

On the company's website, cartoon "story books" from Little Sportsman Inc. include *My First Rifle* as well as a series featuring a freckled-faced protagonist named "Little Jake" which includes the titles *Little Jake and the Three Bears* and *Little Jake On Safari*.

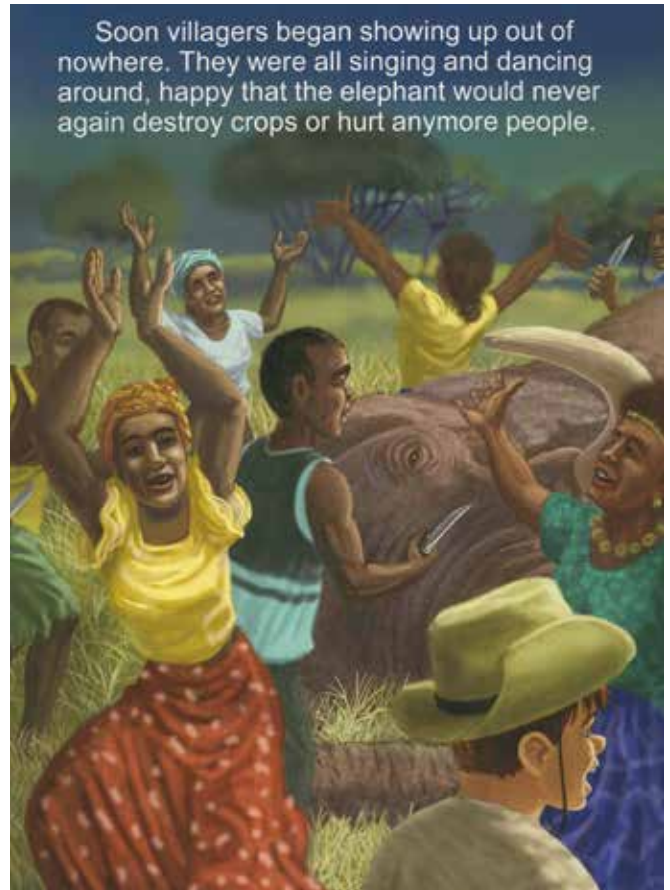
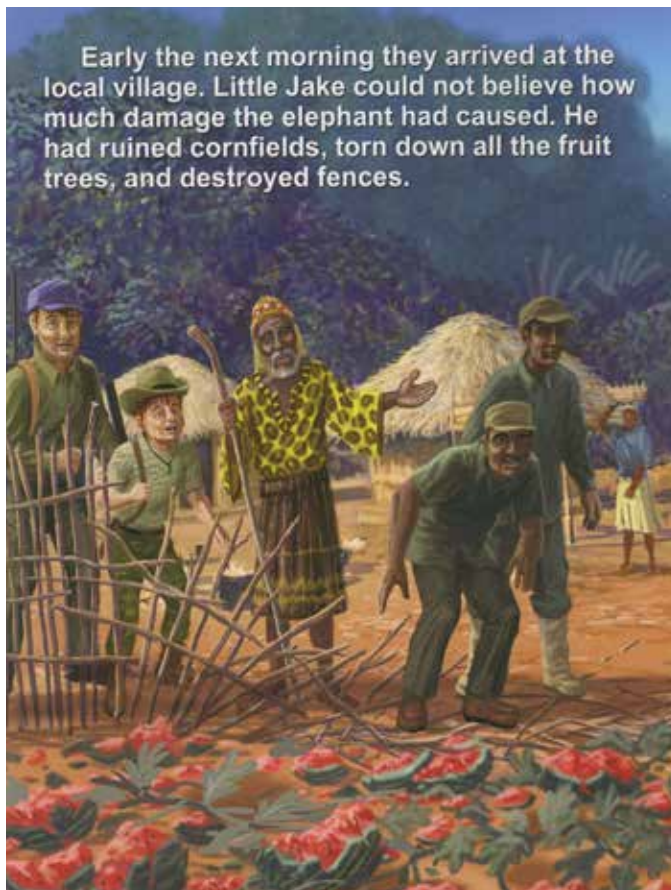
In *Little Jake and the Three Bears*, Little Jake decides he needs a bear rug for his bed to keep warm during the "long cold winter." He then gets on his ATV, visits his friend the game warden to get his "bear-hunting license," and then visits his "favorite sporting goods store" where his friend Jerry sells him the necessary "hunting supplies." Little Jake then waits for bear hunting season to begin, "getting very excited" and noting, "It was almost like waiting for Christmas." After coming across bears that were either "too small" or "too big" to keep him warm, he finds one that is "just right," and shoots it, noting that the bear "never felt a thing." The story ends with Little Jake in bed, covered by his bear rug, eating "tasty bear sausages."

In *Little Jake On Safari*, Little Jake, his dad, and their hunting party interrupt their hunt for buffalo in Africa to aid a local village where there "has been a big bull elephant destroying their crops..." Little Jake and the hunting party go to the village, where they look over a scene of bent corn and smashed watermelons. After it's explained to Little Jake that "These are not the cute, loveable animals you see in cartoons and at the circus" but "one of the smartest and most dangerous animals on earth," the hunting party eventually comes across the elephant, who charges. Little Jake aims "for the brain" and brings the elephant down with two shots from his elephant gun with a "Bang!" and a "Bam!" The local villagers come, and before they start "harvesting the huge animal," begin "singing and dancing around, happy that the elephant would never again destroy crops or hurt anymore [sic] people." In the end, the tribe's chief gives Little Jake the elephant's tusks as a gift "so that you will always remember the time you saved my village."

In a bizarre and brazenly transparent disclaimer, the publisher of the Little Jake series explains that even though Little Jake looks, talks, and acts "like a child":



“Little Jake is a fictional character in his late teens. While small in stature so that young children may relate to him, Little Jake is old enough to hunt and fish safely on his own without adult supervision. As this series evolves with new titles, readers will learn more about Little Jake, his background and family. Soon we will be introduced to Little Jane (Little Jake’s younger sister) through her own book series.”¹⁵



Pages from *Little Jake On Safari*

Despite the presumed acceptability, and even desirability, of the combination of children and guns presented on the Keystone website, across the country, sorrow at the tragedy of the Kentucky shooting was followed by shock and surprise that not only could a five-year-old legally possess his own gun, but that there was a significant faction of the gun industry geared toward this market.

A 2014 article from *NRA Family InSights* on guns for children under eight years of age offers a snapshot of just one gunmaker’s efforts, Marlin, to target children, right down to the creation of a real-life “Marlin Man” by the company:

“There’s been a lot of talk about getting kids interested in shooting. Now, we’re finally seeing firearms manufacturers getting serious about it. Several companies are offering firearms sized just for kids. Marlin has taken a very bold step in that direction. They’ve done things right with their new XT line of .22 rifles. These rifles are not just sized for kids; they’re completely designed for kids.”

“Marlin took a different approach than many companies, which just put a shorter barrel on a rifle and cut the stock off a bit. Marlin engaged in a lengthy research program using real kids as test subjects. They looked at every aspect of a rifle in an effort to determine what they could do to make it more kid-friendly.”

“Their efforts paid off and in a big way. I got to see this first-hand at an event held at the Glade Springs Resort in West Virginia. Like many companies that launch a new firearm, Marlin invited several firearms journalists to come and see these new rifles. But this time, Marlin went a step further: They asked the writers to bring their kids.”

“This made perfect sense, because what better way to evaluate rifles sized specifically for kids than to let kids shoot them? Before the event got underway, the kids spent the morning riding horses. And then, when they arrived at the range, they got to meet the Marlin Man and his horse in person. The Marlin Man is the mounted cowboy Marlin has used as a logo for many years. He was brought to life for the kids at this event and he stirred the cowboy in everyone present.”

“The kids were turned loose on the range, which was staffed with Marlin employees and members of the West Virginia Division of Natural Resources. After two days of shooting thousands of rounds of .22 LR ammunition, the verdict was in: Marlin’s XT 22 Youth rifles are winners. If you’re a kid looking for your first rifle, this is the gun you need to tell your parents about.”¹⁶



Marlin 

RIMFIRE:
XT-22 / XT-17 / MODEL 795 / MODEL 70 PSS

 **MARLIN IS PROUD TO SUPPORT PROJECT APPLESEED**
Project Appleseed and The Revolutionary War Veterans Association’s mission is to teach every American our shared heritage and history, as well as traditional rifle marksmanship skills using our Model 795LTR.
Visit [www. appleseedinfo.org](http://www.appleseedinfo.org) to learn more

Marlin 2016 catalog



Kory Watkins
March 19 via mobile

Liberty Homeschool Picture Day.

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Kory Watkins IM so blessed
March 19 at 11:22am · 3

Daniel Wood No Booger Hook on Stick!!!
March 19 at 12:14pm

Kory Watkins Lol
March 19 at 12:48pm

Sharon Watkins Let them be inn get ugly soon enough
March 19 at 8:46pm via mobile

Kory Watkins This is a innocent p
March 19 at 9:22pm · 1

Daniel Wood guns dont make you

Sarah Michelle Head · Open Carry Texas
17 minutes ago ·

Sold my Bersa 380 to buy a S&W 9mm. My kids seem to approve lol



Photos of very young children with high-powered firearms can be found on websites and social media such as Facebook

“TACTICAL” RIFLES FOR KIDS

From gun magazines, to websites, to social media, two things become clear. For some gun owners there is almost a race to the bottom to see how young a child can be to handle, and eventually possess, a gun. At the same time, there’s not infrequently an inverse trend to see how powerful a gun the child can handle.

Writing for Jews for the Preservation of Firearms Ownership (JPFO) in 2014, JPFO writer contributor Nicki Kenyon explains:

“When my son was 4 years old, we decided it was time to introduce him to gun safety. He couldn’t quite tie his shoes yet, but we knew we had guns in the house, and we knew we needed to instill good habits early, because it was literally a matter of life and death. His father was a police officer, and I was active in gun rights, and made it a point to be armed as much as possible. I still do. It’s a matter of life and death....”

“I can’t remember how old he was, exactly, when he shot his first firearm — I think he was probably 8 years old — but I know he was around 10 when he shot his first machine gun. I remember when he was about 6 years old, I sent him to my bedroom to get some paperwork that was on his father’s night stand. He called down to me and said, ‘Mommy! Daddy’s pistol is sitting on top of the paperwork. Do I have your permission to move it?’ That’s when I knew we taught him well....”

“My son was lucky. He was legally allowed to handle firearms in Virginia. We took him to the range. He shot a variety of firearms — rifles, pistols, machine guns and shot guns. He has had his own eye and hearing protection since he was in elementary school, and he received his first Mossberg Plinkster when he was approximately 9.”¹⁷

And while Kenyon describes her child’s climb up the ladder of firepower with equal doses of pride and rationalization, four months later the risks of putting a full-auto machine gun into the hands of a child was illustrated to the nation with horrific clarity. On August 25, 2014, 39-year-old firearms instructor Charles Vacca, a father of four, was shot and killed at the Last Stop gun range when he was teaching a nine-year-old on vacation with her family in Las Vegas how to shoot an UZI submachine gun. The girl lost control of the weapon as the result of the full-auto weapon’s recoil. The gun climbed up out of her control and she unintentionally shot Vacca in the head. The girl then dropped the weapon and ran to her family, who huddled around her as she held her shoulder.¹⁸

In the comments section of an online article from the NRA’s *American Hunter* magazine titled “Choosing Your Child’s First Gun,” readers detailed the ages at which they felt their own sons and daughters were ready for their first gun: five, six, seven, and older. One of the points raised in the article was the fact that the recoil from many guns can hurt child shooters. As a Virginia Beach gunsmith told the author, “The first thing you want to avoid is to not overgun your kid...You try to give an 8-year-old kid a .308 or some blowaway magnum and it’s going to be too much. It will just make the child recoil shy and that’s the worst thing you can do to a kid.” The author added, “Not only will it hamper their ability to become accurate, but it may chase them away from the sport before they’ve even really had the chance to get into it, according to many experts. Every time they shoot, they’ll be thinking, ‘this gun is going to kick the heck out of me,’ and if that thought is on their mind, they’ll never be able to shoot accurately.”¹⁹

One reader did take issue with the author’s reticence on recommending an AR-15 assault rifle as a first gun for an eight- or 10-year-old child, writing, “If you teach your child proper firearms basics an AR is the perfect way to go. I built my six year old son one and he loves it.”²⁰

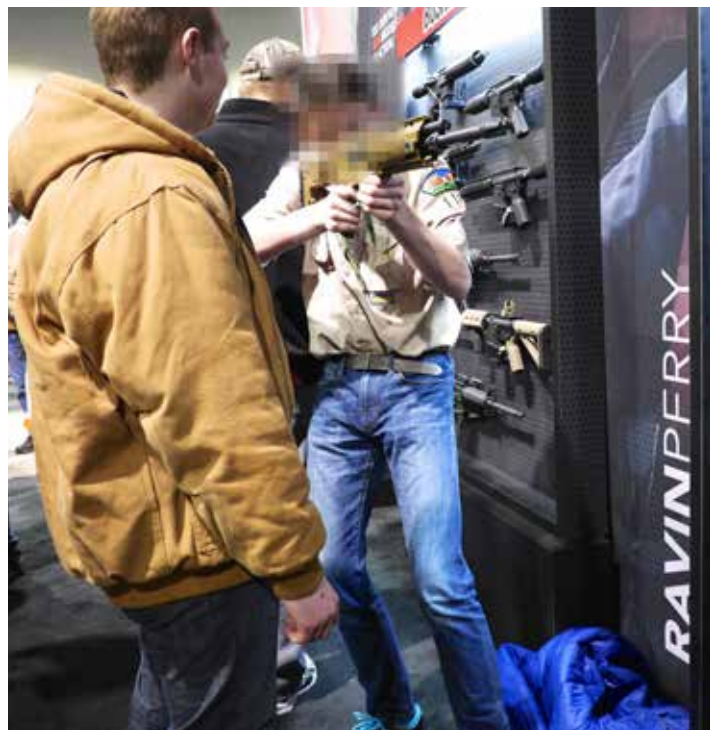


Photo from NRA’s 2014 Great American Outdoor Show (Sue Roman)

For those who don't want to wait to put an assault rifle in their children's hands, but do have concerns about recoil and the weight of the weapon, a growing industry-wide trend toward 22 caliber assault rifles, often utilizing plastic resulting in lighter weight, has taken hold and is expanding. An additional frequently cited benefit is the relatively low cost of .22 ammunition, particularly for those who wish to train with the weapon.²¹ As one author noted in *Shooting Sports Retailer* in discussing 22 caliber AR-style assault rifles: "these guns bring the coolness and fun of the tactical rifle to kids and less serious shooters..."²² Throughout the industry, 22 caliber versions of higher-caliber assault rifles are increasingly common and frequently cited in the context of marketing guns to children:

- The product description for a .22 Bushmaster AR-15 model at the Gander Mountain Sports website states: "Designed for the indoor range and the youth shooter, this Carbon15 .22 LR Rimfire lightweight is sure to add new dimensions to your Bushmaster shooting pleasure. Operational controls are functionally and ergonomically identical to AR-15 type rifles..."²³

- "INTRODUCING THE NEW SIG522 Rifle" says a Sig Sauer ad for a new 22 caliber assault rifle that appeared in the Summer



Junior Shooters, Summer 2011

2011 edition of *Junior Shooters*. [See later section *Junior Shooters: "For Kids By Kids"*] Under the headline "DOUBLE TAKE," the text reads, "It looks like the legendary SIG556, but look again. It's the SIG522 Rifle firing affordable .22LR. The new SIG522 has the look, feel, and action of the classic military-style SIG556 rifle...yet it costs much less, and fires affordable .22LR rounds. The full-size semi-auto SIG522 features a button rifled barrel with flash suppressor, light weight aluminum receiver with integral Picatinny rail, Swiss-style folding stock, and a 25-round magazine. To find out more about how to get the look, feel, action, and dependability of the SIG556, combined with .22LR caliber affordability, check out the new SIG522 at www.sigsauer.com — **on the double!**" [Emphasis in original]²⁴

- An article in *Junior Shooters* exclaims, "One of the best dedicated AR-type .22 rifles to come out in the last couple of years is Smith & Wesson's M&P15-22. The M&P15-22 is built with high-strength polymer upper and lower receivers. This creates a reduced-weight rifle that retains the looks and operating features of the standard M&P rifle. Let me tell you, this rifle rocks!"²⁵
- A December 2013 review published on the website of Bill's Gun Shop & Range promises that the "Beretta ARX 160 in .22 LR is the company's fun version of their current military carbine that was designed in 2008. The military versions come chambered in 5.56x45mm NATO, 5.45x39mm Soviet, 6.8mm Remington SPC and 7.62x39mm Soviet. Along with the Italian Army it is also being fielded by Albania, Egypt, Kazakhstan, the Mexican Federal Police and Turkmenistan. The U.S. was in the process of evaluating it as a replacement for the M4 before the replacement process of [sic] cancelled." At the end of the glowing review, the shop concludes, "December is the perfect month for Bill's to offer this carbine as their Gun of the Month as plenty of kids (both young and old) will have a military replica .22 on their

www.billsgs.com Pinterest.com BillsGS Facebook.com BillsGS Twitter.com/BillsGS

Bill's Gun Shop & Range
www.billsgs.com

Beretta ARX160
\$539.00

Includes 100 **FREE** rounds of ammo.
\$45 **Free** Range Pass with every gun purchase.

December Gun of the Month

4080 W. Broadway Ave. **Robbinsdale** 763.533.9597 • 3621 88th Ave. **Circle Pines** 763.792.4867 • 1920 Crestview Drive **Hudson** 715.690.1198

December "Gun of the Month" from the website of Bill's Gun Shop and Range

Christmas list. The Beretta ARX 160 is a great choice and the holiday gives you the perfect excuse to buy one and act like it is a gift for your son or daughter. Just be sure to bring them to the range and let them shoot it every once in a while.”²⁶ Surrounded by candy canes, a bow, and ribbon, the assault weapon is the gun dealer’s “December Gun of the Month.”

The appeal of the Beretta assault rifle to youth was made clear at the 2014 NRA-sponsored Great American Outdoor Show in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. At the Beretta display at the show, a constant stream of young children, some alone, others accompanied by their parents, were drawn to the models of the gun, as well as other Beretta assault weapons, as these photographs of the Beretta display at the show illustrate.



Photos from the Beretta display at the NRA's 2014 Great American Outdoor Show (Sue Roman)



Photo from NRA's 2014 Great American Outdoor Show (Sue Roman, VPC)

GUNS IN A RAINBOW OF COLORS

According to *Shooting Sports Retailer*, "More companies are offering pistols, rifles and shotguns built for smaller-framed shooters these days, with a dizzying array of models, colors and calibers to choose from. Making sure your customers get the best fit could help bring the next generation into the shooting sports."²⁷ The article, "The Best Guns for Smaller Shooters," warns:

"Lenin was famously quoted as saying 'Give me just one generation of youth, and I'll transform the whole world.' With this in mind, developing the next generation in the shooting sports isn't just a business decision: The survival of the firearms world depends on the political will of those who come after us, which is a direct result of their involvement in the shooting sports."

"So for reasons both fiscal and political, it's critical to provide products well-suited to young shooters. Although these guns have traditionally been called 'youth models,' when we started looking at the current offerings, we saw many called 'compact' versions instead. This implicitly points out that while we're using age as our primary qualifier, the features that make a gun well matched for young people also help the gun fit other shooters who are small of stature, such as females."²⁸

Most common are pink guns for women and girls. At the online Sportsman's Outdoor Superstore, potential buyers can browse "Guns with Color," which includes pistols, revolvers, rifles (including numerous assault rifles),



Photo from NRA's 2014 Great American Outdoor Show (VPC)

and shotguns. Under pink pistols are weapons from Beretta, Browning, Cobra, Kel-Tec, SCCY, Ruger, Sig Sauer, Taurus, and Walther. Pink guns for females are a key marketing tool for girls:

- “When 8-year-old Sara saw the gun, she knew she wanted to shoot it. Even though she’d never shot a gun before in her life and had never shown an interest in shooting, once she took a look at the ‘Muddy Girl’ from Henry Repeating Arms, she wanted to take her first shot.”

“New in 2014, this Henry mini-bolt rifle, called the Muddy Girl, sports its namesake’s camo pattern — a zany hot-pink-purple-and-black combination that belongs on more guns than just this little wonder. It makes a lifestyle statement for females that says, ‘This gun is mine. Get your own...’”

“Sara, a ‘girly-girl’ who likes to cheerlead, left her pompoms behind, yet still coordinated her pink-and-black matching apparel for the photo shoot. Out on the range, her Aunt Marti — a pro-staffer for Mossy Oak and Moultrie Products...showed her how to shoulder the gun and how to weld her cheek to the curvy, synthetic stock...”

“‘I like the color and the size of this gun,’ said Sara. ‘And I also like that it didn’t kick me and it was easy to use...’”

“Its one-piece synthetic stock has been designed with just the right angle for little hands to grasp the gun firmly and still pull the trigger with confidence.”²⁹

- Writing in *Junior Shooters* magazine, 12-year-old Casey Lutz is featured with a pink CZ bolt-action youth rifle. Says Lutz: “When my dad brought home the gun, a CZ 452 Scout, chambered in 22 long rifle, I was



Savage Arms youth rifles are featured at the NRA's 2014 Great American Outdoor Show (Sue Roman) and in *NRA Family InSights*

excited to see that the gun was pink! My first thought was, 'Finally, a cool gun for a girl!' It's nice to see that companies like CZ make guns specifically for young women shooters. The second thing I noticed was the gun was small and compact and was designed to fit kids."³⁰

A crayon-box of colors is offered for guns specifically targeted at youth, including the 22 caliber weapons through which they are most likely to be introduced to shooting.

- Smith & Wesson offers a 22 caliber version of its M&P15 (M&P stands for Military & Police) AR-15 assault rifle in bright colors that include Pink Platinum, Purple Platinum, and Harvest Moon Orange.³¹
- Savage Arms' youth rifle, the Rascal, presents the gun in child-friendly colors: red, yellow, orange, pink, and blue. In an ad for the youth rifle, the company promises that the firearms deliver "ONE SHOT, ONE THRILL!"
- On its website, featuring assault rifles "built by Americans, for Americans," Black Forge Weapons offers "Youth Model" AR-15 assault rifles that come in orange, violet, green, blue, and red.³²



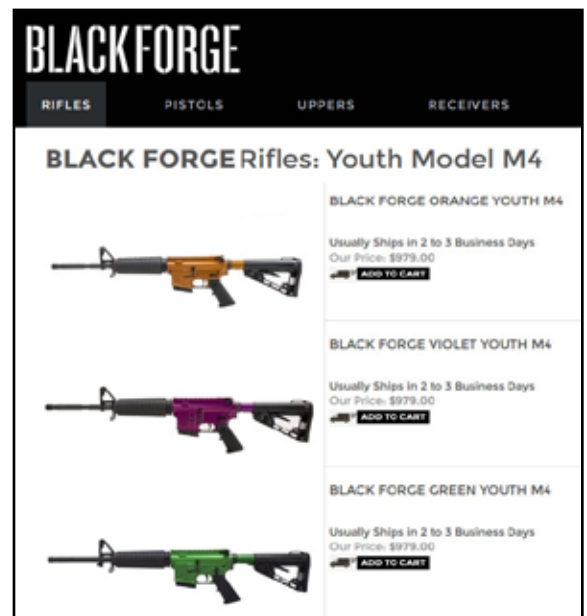
Twelve-year-old Casey, *Junior Shooters*, Summer 2011



Eight-year-old Sara, *NRA Family InSights*



Bright-colored .22 assault rifles featured on the Smith & Wesson website



"Youth Model" Black Forge AR-15-style assault rifles

THE "FISCAL AND POLITICAL" BENEFITS OF MARKETING GUNS TO CHILDREN

As noted by *Shooting Sports Retailer*, the impetus for marketing to children is both "fiscal and political."³³ In addition to the hoped-for financial benefits of marketing guns to youth, a corollary goal is to ensure that such an effort will help maintain a pro-gun base for political action.

Writing in the NRA's *America's 1st Freedom* magazine, Editor Mark Chesnut warns that "the future of our freedom — and our shooting and hunting heritage — lies in our children and grandchildren. Let's not get too busy or too focused on ourselves and our own activities to pass along to our kids the important things they need to know in order to be informed citizens and voters in the future."³⁴

In a Spring 2012 editorial, *Junior Shooters* Editor-In-Chief Andy Fink chided those gun industry members who, when urged to target youth, respond, "Oh, that isn't my market?"³⁵ Noting that it's not just an issue of jobs, but of "gun rights," he warns:

"It is thrilling to see so many people supporting juniors around the country. People are volunteering their time. Companies and organizations also provide time, energy, products, and money to ensure the shooting sports continue. However, we are not doing enough. All the companies involved in the shooting industry



Junior Shooters, March 2011

need to realize our youth are the future of the shooting industry and thus each job within the industry is dependent upon juniors growing up with an appreciation for the sport we love. Each adult needs to help in some way by volunteering, or promoting youth shooting. This effort will also have a huge impact on retaining our gun rights, our hunting heritage, and wildlife conservation. We all need to do our part.”³⁶

Later that year, Fink revisited the issue:

“Each person who is introduced to the shooting sports and has a positive experience is another vote in favor of keeping our American heritage and freedom alive. They may not be old enough to vote now, but they will be in the future. And think about how many lives they will come in contact with that they can impact! Each of us affects others, and it is up to us how we make an impact on the future.”³⁷

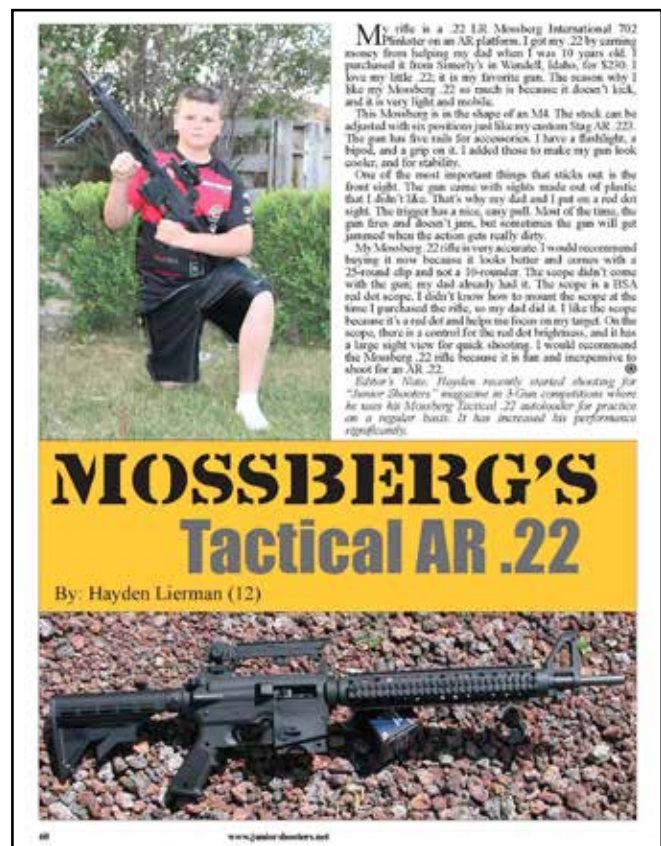
Or, as a *Junior Shooters* promotional ad for itself in the magazine cheerfully explained under the headline “Junior Shooters: Making a Mark” — “This is not your everyday magazine. This is a magazine for kids and parents interested in preserving our 2nd Amendment rights. But not in a stuffy shirt, political way. We want to have fun. Join us.”³⁸

And in an article on the National Shooting Sports Foundation’s 2015 gun industry summit, *Shooting Sports Retailer* stated:

“And of course, the problem with failing to recruit and grow is that numbers equate to political power. In an era when the private ownership and use of firearms, the right to ‘keep and bear arms,’ has come under increasing pressure, numbers and a young, vital membership are critical.”³⁹



Junior Shooters, Summer 2013



Junior Shooters, Summer 2012

JUNIOR SHOOTERS: "FOR KIDS BY KIDS"

Perhaps the most honest and unvarnished look into the ongoing effort to create a youth gun culture can be found in *Junior Shooters*, available online and in print format.

Based in Boise, Idaho, the magazine "strives to be the first of its kind to promote juniors involved in all shooting disciplines..." and is "dedicated to juniors of all ages and their parents." The publication adds, "We care about kids and their parents and want you to have a place to go to find what is needed to get started in many different shooting venues."⁴⁰

A magazine dedicated to junior shooters of all shooting disciplines
Junior Shooters
of Shooters magazine
MAKING A MARK
JUNIOR SHOOTERS

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Posted By admin on November 11, 2015

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IMR 4955 Added to Enduron® Series of Technology Advanced Smokeless Powders

Shawnee, KS, November 11, 2015 – IMR® Legendary Powders is pleased to announce

IMR 4955, the latest introduction to the Enduron® series of smokeless powders.

IMR 4955 lands between IMR 4451 and IMR 7977 on the burn rate chart and is an ideal choice for many popular calibers such as 270 Winchester, 25-06 Remington and the 300 Winchester Magnum. Enduron® Technology allows accuracy to be maintained over longer shooting sessions, thanks to a special additive which helps remove copper fouling as the rifle is fired.

This environmentally friendly formulation delivers ideal loading densities in medium and big game hunting calibers.

Ballistic variations based on climate conditions are a thing of the past with IMR 4955, thanks to its temperature insensitivity. From extreme heat to extreme cold, shooters will see uniform velocities. IMR 4955 has a small grain size, making it extremely

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MGM TARGETS

Rock River Arms
INTRODUCING THE LAR-6.8 COYOTE CARBINE

STAG ARMS
WWW.STAGARMS.COM

Practical Shooting Federation

The home page for *Junior Shooters* features ads for assault rifle manufacturers Rock River Arms and Stag Arms

Visitors to the website are greeted by ads for AR-15 assault rifles. Clicking on the Rock River Arms ad for its LAR Coyote Carbine, the viewer is taken to a full description of the weapon on the company's website, and the ability to explore the full site. An ad for Stag Arms shows an AR-15 assault rifle and in a series of panels asks the questions "LEFT HANDED?" "RIGHT HANDED?" "WE'VE GOT YOU COVERED!" Clicking on the ad brings you to the company's website.⁴¹

Additional gun manufacturers listed as sponsors on the website are: companies that manufacture only assault weapons, such as Bushmaster (manufacturer of the AR-15 assault rifle used in the 2012 Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting in Newtown, Connecticut that left 20 students and six educators dead) as well as the aforementioned Rock River Arms and Stag Arms; companies that manufacture assault weapons and high-capacity pistols, such as FNHUSA, Remington, Sig Sauer, Smith & Wesson, and Sturm, Ruger & Company; and, companies that manufacture solely pistols, such as Glock.⁴² Each issue of *Junior Shooters* contains an Advertiser's Index at the back of the magazine. Among the associations listed as sponsors of the publication is the gun industry trade association the National Shooting Sports Foundation (NSSF) and National Rifle Association Youth Programs.

Little known outside of pro-gun circles, the magazine frequently presents a blunt view of the financial and political benefits that recruitment of children offers the pro-gun movement.

In discussing the benefits of "junior shooters" to the gun industry and gun lobby, Editor-In-Chief Andy Fink explains, "Juniors start shooting, and become interested, in related sports at a young age, as young as six, seven, or eight" and can continue as a "junior" shooter until the age of 18 or 21, adding, "They may also have the build of a young youth or an adult."⁴³

Fink makes the case that literally every firearms product can be marketed to "juniors," including concealed carry pistols (with the goal of the youth eventually obtaining a concealed carry permit when old enough) and assault rifles, writing:

"What market isn't tied to juniors? I really can't think of any. Military and law enforcement firearms have civilian versions which are applicable. The Concealed Carry Weapon (CCW) market has firearms which hold 10-rounds which is the limit for IDPA [International Defensive Pistol Association] competition.⁴⁴ When the junior turns 21 they can get a CCW permit. What do they buy? It is usually a gun from a manufacturer they are familiar with."⁴⁵

Promising content "For Kids By Kids," articles in the magazine, with headlines such as "Why I Love Bushmaster AR-15s...You Should, Too"⁴⁶ commonly promote high-capacity semiautomatic pistols and assault rifles, often referred to by the industry-promoted euphemism "Modern Sporting Rifles" (MSR). At the same time, advertisements for assault weapons, high-capacity pistols, and firearm accessories are ubiquitous. Examples of the types of weapons and accessories promoted for children and youth in editorial content and advertisements are offered below.

- A 2014 press release from gun manufacturer Mossberg included with online articles on the *Junior Shooters* website boasts that the company has "45 Firearms Developed Specifically for Smaller-Statured or Younger Shooters." The self-proclaimed "leader in the development and design of firearms for younger and small-statured shooters," the company touts its "recently-launched Mossberg 2014 Youth Catalog" and lists among its "industry-partners" the National Shooting Sports Foundation and the National Rifle Association.⁴⁷

- A profile of an AR-15 assault rifle upper receiver states that the “Adams Arms 14.5” Evo Ultralite Piston AR-15 upper is a great upper for a junior shooter; it’s light, it’s short, and it’s accurate.”⁴⁸

“One advantage to having such a short, light upper is maneuverability and ease of use by younger, smaller shooters. At one local 3-Gun match [see the later section, *The Industry Finds Its “Reality” Video Game* in *3-Gun Competition*], there was a long hallway with four doorways that you had to shoot through. The targets were set up so you had to move into the doorway. The short barrel really helped me move in and out of the doorways quickly. It was a real advantage.”⁴⁹

- In a 2009 article that comes across more as a promotional piece, “The Mosquito: A Cool .22 With A Sting,” Editor-in-Chief Andy Fink writes, “The .22 Mosquito is a real stinger.” Spread across the top of the page is manufacturer Sig Sauer’s logo. At the bottom is a picture of the pistol in pink, with the caption “The pink Mosquito — For the ladies!” Promising that the pistol’s “slide is easy to operate even for youngsters,” in the article Fink tests the gun, as do children ages 11, 12, 14, and 16. Fink reports, “Each of them liked the feel of the gun and operation. They had to get used to the first shot cocking the hammer being double-action with a heavy trigger pull of 12.1 pounds.”⁵⁰

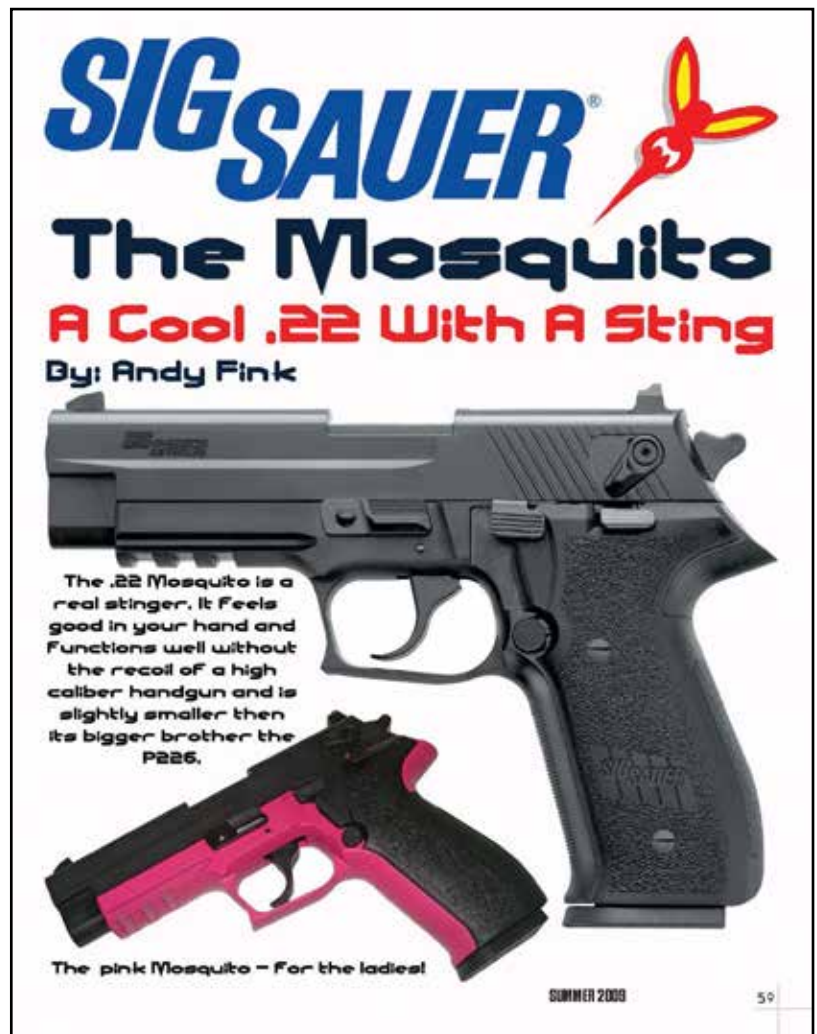
Four years later, Fink revisited the gun, this time with three co-authors, two age 13 and one 18 years old:

“This pistol is sweet! It looks cool. It fits in your hand well, even the small hands of juniors and smaller women. It’s a double/single-action semi-auto and is great for plinking and practice...⁵¹ Sig Sauer’s Mosquito has an ergonomic design to provide an enjoyable shooting experience. It is based on the design of the Sig Sauer P226 but is 10% smaller in size and chambered for the .22 long rifle cartridge.”⁵²

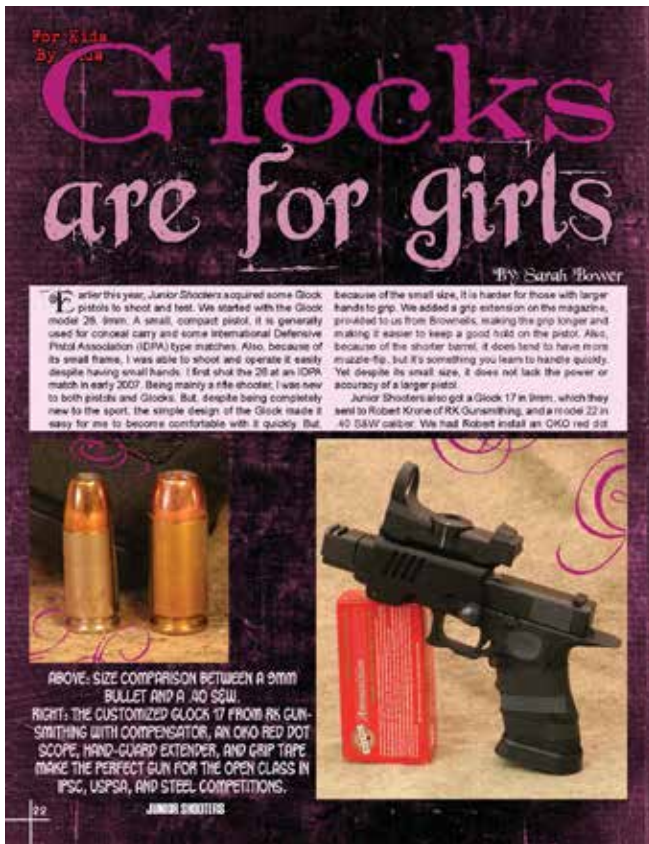
In the article, endorsements for the pistol are offered by two 13-year-old boys:

“Hayden Lierman (13): My .22 Mosquito pistol is the Desert Digital Camo model manufactured by Sig Sauer...The pistol looks cool and feels like a Beretta, which I think is awesome. It’s a desert camouflage color.”⁵³

“Wyatt Irish (13): At first I thought that it was way too small to be



Junior Shooters, Summer 2009



Junior Shooters, Summer 2009



Junior Shooters, Summer 2010

reliable...However, one thing was for sure: I loved how the grip felt in my hand. For a person with small, bony-fingered, 13-year-old hands, the grip almost felt custom fit.”⁵⁴

- In “Glocks are for Girls,” the magazine reviews “a small, compact pistol” that is “generally used for conceal carry.” The reviewer notes that “because of its small frame, I was able to shoot and operate it easily despite having small hands.”⁵⁵
- Under “Kids’ Gear” the magazine promotes online shooting sports accessories marketer Brownells (headed by NRA Board Member Pete Brownell) and features an assault rifle with a 100-round ammunition magazine:

“WOW! Do you need shooting accessories to go with your firearm? What about optics, mounting equipment, slings, magazines, cleaning materials, and parts? Brownells carries just about anything you can imagine... Junior Shooters has been working with Brownells since it started publication. We have found them to [sic] very supportive of promoting juniors and the shooting sports, and their customer service is excellent! We seriously recommend you check them out at www.brownells.com.”⁵⁶
- “FIREFIELD SALUTES YOU, JUNIOR SHOOTERS!” is the headline atop a full-page ad from parts and accessories manufacturer Firefield. Below two males dressed in camo, one holding a shotgun and the other brandishing a pistol, the text reads:

FIREFIELD SALUTES YOU, JUNIOR SHOOTERS!



We know that you are tomorrow's leaders of the industry, the ones who continue to value and support the outdoors through shooting. The one's who will continue to uphold the values of our country. The one's who will introduce the value of the great outdoors to the next generation and instill in them the love and respect that comes with being a shooter. Firefield isn't all about winning. We know the real victory lies in getting out there, smelling the fresh air and holding freedom in your hands. Let's keep that victory for the next junior shooters.

Firefield-Victory Justifies Everything!



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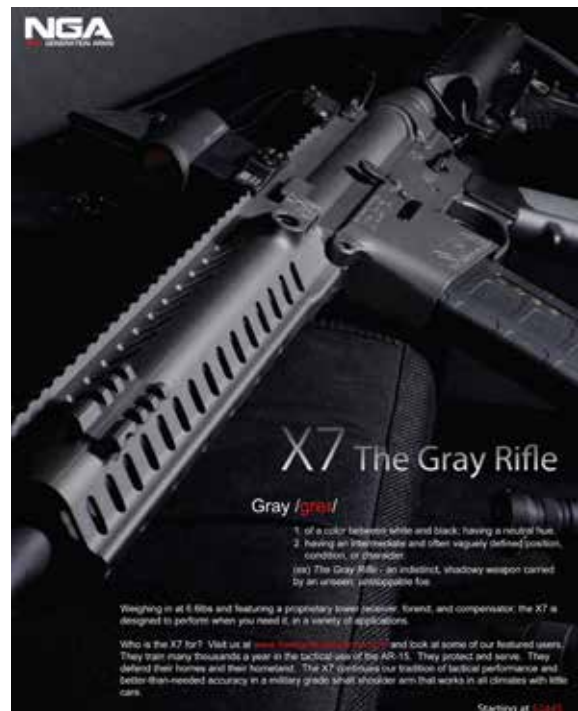
Junior Shooters, Winter 2011

“We know that you are tomorrow’s leaders of the industry, the ones who continue to value and support the outdoors through shooting. The one’s [sic] who will continue to uphold the values of our country. The one’s [sic] who will introduce the value of the great outdoors to the next generation and instill in them the love and respect that comes with being a shooter. Firefield isn’t all about winning. We know the real victory lies in getting out there, smelling the fresh air and holding freedom in your hands. Let’s keep that victory for the next junior shooters.”

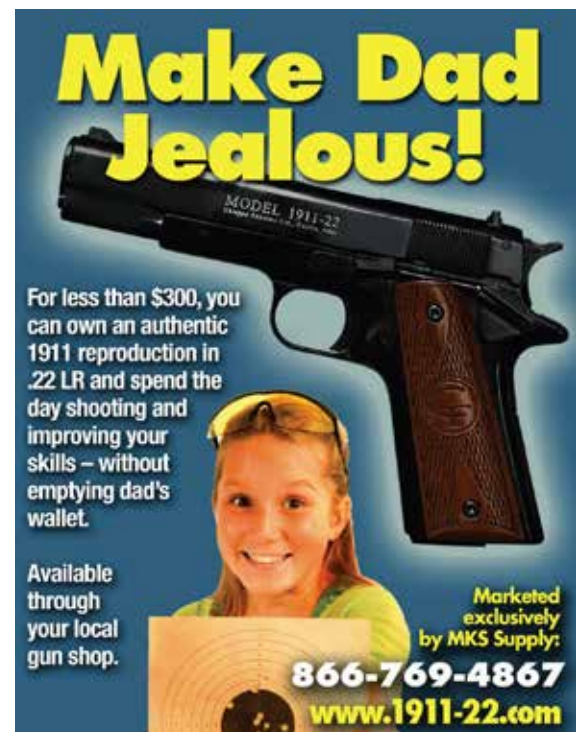
The ad ends with “Firefield — Victory Justifies Everything!”⁵⁷

In addition to the implicit advertising benefits *Junior Shooters*’ articles “For Kids By Kids” offer the gun industry, the magazine regularly features full-page ads from gun companies, many featuring assault rifles and high-capacity pistols:

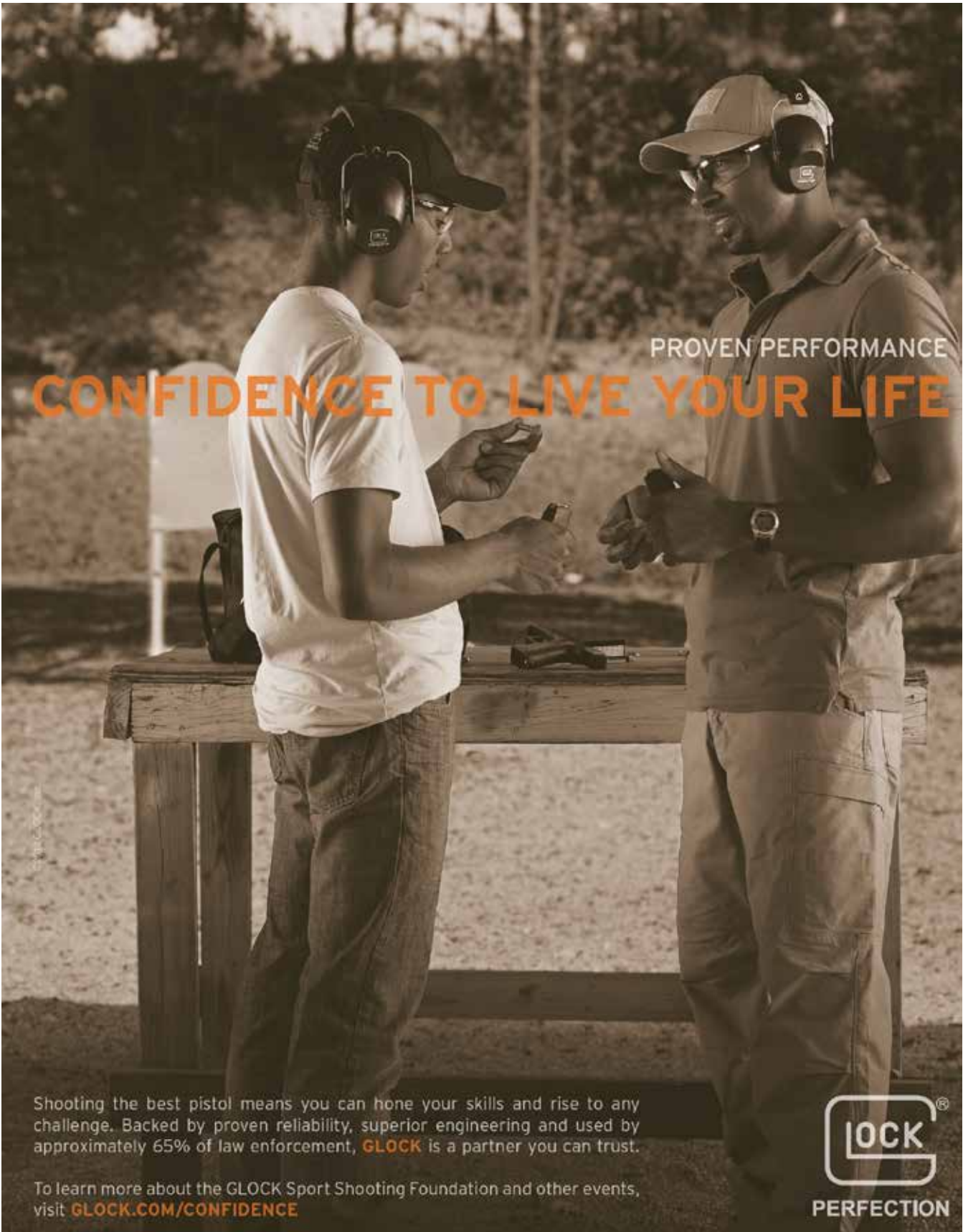
- A full-page ad from Next Generation Arms for its X7 AR-15-style assault rifle states: “*The Gray Rifle* — an indistinct, shadowy weapon carried by an unseen, unstoppable foe.” The ad continues: “Who is the X7 for? Visit us at www.nextgenerationarms.com and look at some of our featured users. They train many thousands a year in the tactical use of the AR-15. They protect and serve. They defend their homes and their homeland. The X7 continues our tradition of tactical performance and better-than-needed accuracy in a military grade small shoulder arm that works in all climates with little care.”⁵⁸
- An ad for a .22 caliber 1911 pistol has the headline “Make Dad Jealous” with a smiling young girl holding a target as the centerpiece. The text reads, “For less than \$300, you can own an authentic 1911 reproduction in .22 LR and spend the day shooting and improving your skills — without emptying dad’s wallet. Available through your local gun shop.”⁵⁹



Junior Shooters, March 2011



Junior Shooters, Winter 2011



PROVEN PERFORMANCE
CONFIDENCE TO LIVE YOUR LIFE

Shooting the best pistol means you can hone your skills and rise to any challenge. Backed by proven reliability, superior engineering and used by approximately 65% of law enforcement, **GLOCK** is a partner you can trust.

To learn more about the GLOCK Sport Shooting Foundation and other events, visit GLOCK.COM/CONFIDENCE



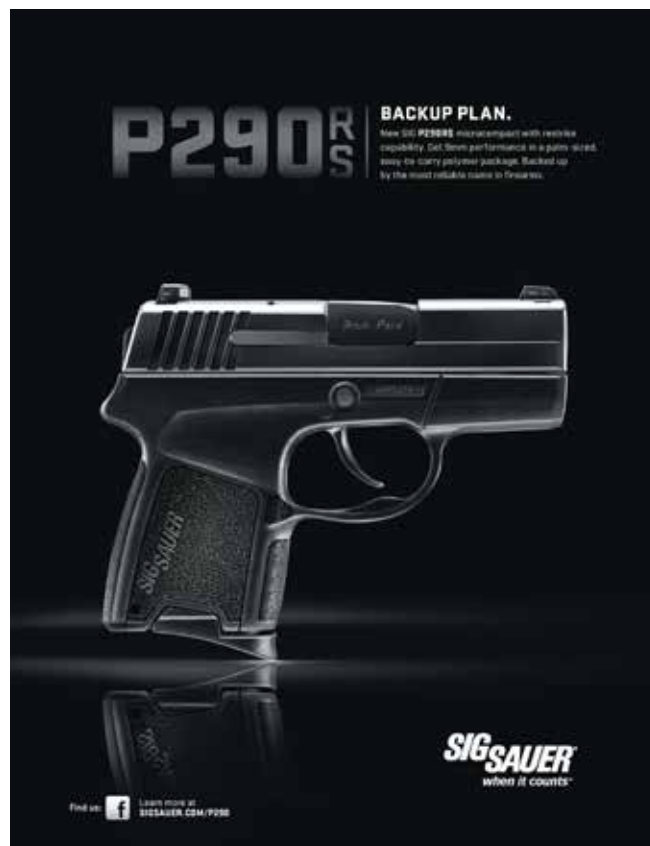
PERFECTION

Junior Shooters, Spring 2013

- A full-page ad for Glock pistols shows two black males, a youth and an adult, at an outdoor range, with the headline “Confidence to Live Your Life.” The ad, in which the youth is holding an ammunition magazine in one hand and a round in the other, states, “Shooting the best pistol means you can hone your skills and rise to any challenge. Backed by proven reliability, superior engineering and used by approximately 65% of law enforcement, GLOCK is a partner you can trust.”⁶⁰
- A full-page ad from Stag Arms features an AR-15-style assault rifle with a high-capacity ammunition magazine and promises that the gun is “Adaptable To Any Application.”⁶¹
- An ad for Rock River Arms’ LAR Series of assault rifles (which come in Varmint and Predator models) states, “From varmints to vermin, predators to prey, RRA LAR-8 Series Rifles.”⁶²



Junior Shooters, Spring 2012



Junior Shooters, Spring 2013

- A full-page ad for Sig Sauer’s SP2022 pistol features the handgun, notes that it comes in 9mm, .357, and 40 caliber and adds, “No wonder it’s becoming the standard choice among elite military and LE [law enforcement] forces worldwide.”⁶³ A second full-page ad from the company for its “microcompact” P290RS concealed carry pistol states, “Get 9mm performance in a palm-sized, easy-to-carry polymer package.” The tag line for the ad states, “Sig Sauer, when it counts.”⁶⁴

NRA "JUNIOR MEMBERS"

Since 1981, and until recently, the National Rifle Association has published in print or online *NRA InSights* magazine for its Junior Members⁶⁵ under the age of 15 (although the online content is available to anyone).⁶⁶

The industry's focus on youth as its financial savior is made clear in an ad for Marlin's XT rimfire rifle that appeared in the online version of the magazine. The headline of the ad reads, "FOR THE FUTURE OF OUR SPORT, IT'S THE MOST POWERFUL FIREARM ON EARTH." With a picture of a father and son together, the ad promises that the gun can "light a fire for the shooting sports or rekindle your own." Clicking on the ad leads the reader to the company's website and its full product line. Another online ad, for the Kel-Tec PMR-30 pistol, links to the company's website, where the first three images that greet the reader are adult shooters holding assault rifles.⁶⁷

In January 2014, the NRA changed the title of *NRA InSights* to *NRA Family InSights* and switched to an online-only format for the magazine with accompanying website. In an editorial announcing the switch, the magazine promised, "In addition to the fun and informative content designed just for Junior members, we'll be including articles, photos, reviews and news for everyone in your family — parents, grandparents, and other family members."

In its "Industry Spotlight," the site features a profile of NRA Board Member Ronnie Barrett, inventor of the 50 caliber sniper rifle. Fifty caliber sniper rifles, used by U.S. troops around the world, can bring down commercial aircraft on takeoff and landing, pierce armor plating, and are accurate to more than a mile. They are banned in the state of California and the District of Columbia, but elsewhere they are as easy to purchase as a hunting



NRA *InSights* online edition



NRA *InSights* online edition

rifle under federal law. The promotional profile finishes with, “To read more about Ronnie Barrett and Barrett Firearms, go to www.barrett.net.” By clicking on the link, the reader is taken to Barrett’s website which features solely assault rifles and 50 caliber sniper rifles.⁶⁸

Under “Kids,” visitors are presented with two subsections: “Under 8” and “8 and Up.” Both include a section titled “Guns.”⁶⁹

A review of the Thompson/Center HotShot rifle in the “Under 8” section states:

“It’s important to make a distinction here. With the HotShot, we’re not talking about a slightly reduced-size rifle for teens who are not quite ready for a full-size gun. No, we’re talking about a tiny gun intended for the very youngest shooters — the ultimate first gun. ‘We’re targeting the six- to 12-year-old range and feel that with the inclusion of the one-inch spacer in the box, there will be a longer period that the child can use the rifle, potentially out to 15 years old,’ explains...[Craig Cushman, director of marketing for Thompson/Center].”

“That’s important. With the number of hunters declining, it’s crucial to get kids introduced to the sport as early as possible.”

“The HotShot means that even the youngest shooters now have a gun sized just for them.”⁷⁰

Also included in the website’s “Under 8” section are “Awesome Apps,” which include for \$2.99 the *NRA Gun Guide* app. Text promoting the app asks:

“Do you like the idea of being able to call up the specs of multiple firearms on a whim? Looking to win the next debate about calibers and models at the range? If so the ‘NRA Gun Guide’ app is exactly what you’ve been waiting for.”

“The ‘NRA Gun Guide’ is searchable by gun type, action type, manufacturer, price range and caliber/gauge, making it easy to find out vital info about the rifle in your local gun store or that pistol your buddy is trying to get you to buy at an inflated price.”

“With an easy-to-follow design, the ‘NRA Gun Guide’ is suitable for all levels of interest in firearms or experience with mobile apps. And, as new content is regularly added, it can only get better.”⁷¹

When opened, the app promises “Hundreds of Guns Inside!” The “Semi-Auto Handguns” category of the app contains a wide range of pistols from major manufacturers (Beretta, Colt’s Manufacturing, Glock, Heckler & Koch, Kel-Tec, Sig Sauer, Smith & Wesson, Sturm, Ruger & Company, and others) including numerous high-capacity firearms as well as guns recommended for concealed carry. The “Semi-Auto Rifles” category of the app is dominated by military-style assault rifles — AR-15s and others, including 50 caliber sniper rifles. Assault rifle manufacturers included in the category include Barrett, Beretta, Bushmaster, Colt’s Manufacturing Co., DPMS, FNH-USA, Heckler & Koch, Rock River Arms, and others.



NRA Gun Guide App

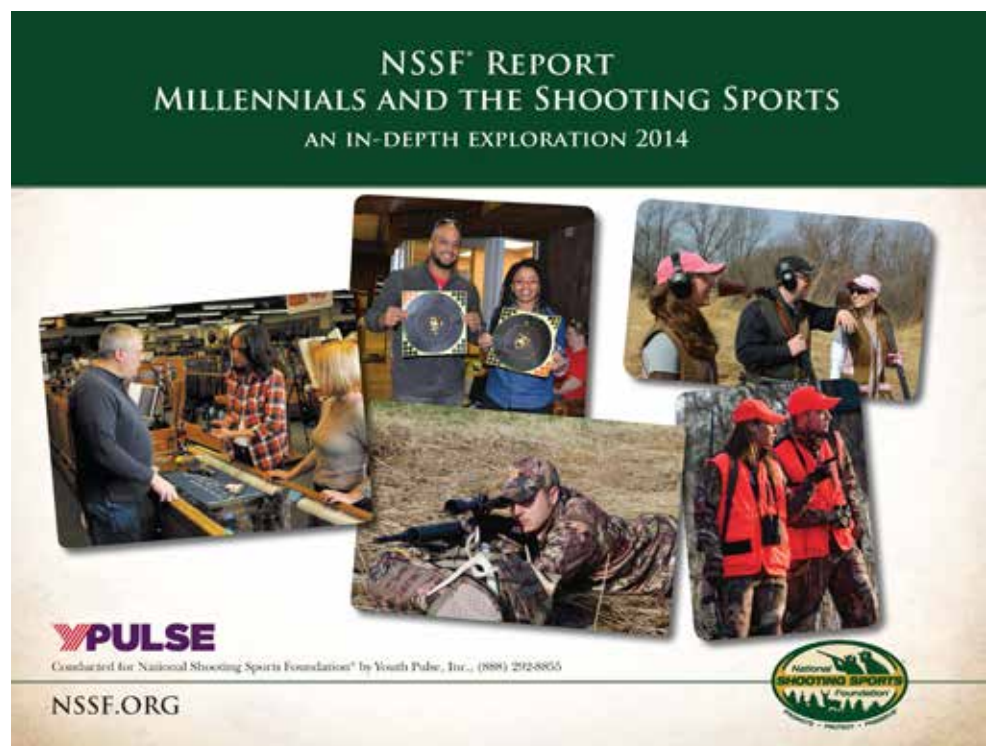
An article titled “My First .22 Pistol” offers reassurance to those wanting to introduce children to guns: “Fortunately for you, there are many people — neighbors, coaches, competitors, sales staff — who want to encourage youth shooters and turn them into lifelong firearms enthusiasts and Second Amendment advocates.” The article notes that a young person’s first pistol may come from brothers or sisters, or a “hand-me-down from someone you meet at the shooting range.”^{72 73}

The NRA has a wide range of additional programs focused on youth, some of which are named for their gun industry funders, such as the Brownells/NRA National Youth Shooting Sports Ambassador Program, Brownells/NRA Day, and the Winchester/NRA Marksmanship Qualification Program. (In addition, the NRA has launched a concerted online effort with gun industry support to reach out to Millennials.)

NATIONAL SHOOTING SPORTS FOUNDATION: THE GUN INDUSTRY’S TOBACCO INSTITUTE

While the National Rifle Association functions as the *unofficial* trade association for the firearms industry, the National Shooting Sports Foundation (NSSF) is its official trade association. In a grim irony, NSSF’s headquarters is located in Newtown, Connecticut. The role played by the NSSF within the gun industry is not unlike that which was played by The Tobacco Institute for the tobacco industry. The NSSF offers a wide range of publications for its industry patrons, focusing primarily on marketing. At the same time, just as The Tobacco Institute denied a causal link between cigarettes and cancer, the NSSF continually works to minimize the hazards associated with exposure to firearms, especially by children.

For example, in December 2011, NSSF issued a press release that made the claim that hunting, as measured by injuries per number of participants, was actually safer than bowling, claiming a “percentage of injury per 100 participants” of only .05 percent compared to .06 percent for bowlers. Using NSSF’s math, hunting was behind only camping and billiards in its low rate of injury. Other activities NSSF claimed hunting was safer than included golf and tennis. Left out of NSSF’s equations were the



NSSF’s *Millennials and The Shooting Sports: An In-Depth Exploration*

severity of injuries for each category, that is, those injuries, if counted, that resulted in crippling disability or death (a distinction that might have benefited golf and tennis as compared to hunting, which included not only those injured by gunfire, but also from falling out of treestands).⁷⁴ Soon after, in a focus group of 12- to 16-year-olds conducted for NSSF and another organization, a similar argument was made and countered:

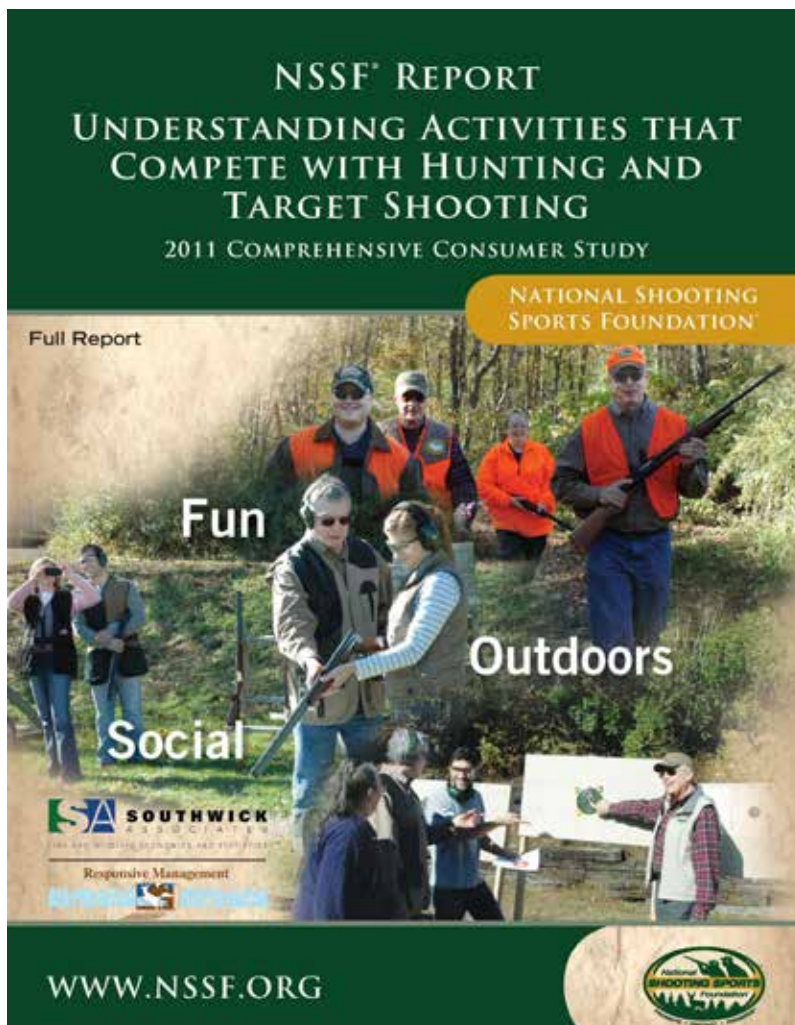
“A substantial number of individuals said that hunting and target shooting were rather dangerous activities due to the involvement of firearms. However, others insisted that hunting and shooting were no more dangerous than many mainstream sports; one person suggested that although the *rate* of injuries in hunting and target shooting is generally lower, any accidents that do occur are more likely to be fatal.”⁷⁵

In all of NSSF’s publications the lethal risk from guns is rarely acknowledged, except as a marketing hurdle. When it is, gun death is consistently presented as being synonymous solely with unintentional shootings. Rarely are gun homicides — with youth as either perpetrators or victims — or suicides ever mentioned. Moreover, the risk of death from guns is, at best, only hinted at as illustrated by this “Message to Kids About Firearms Responsibility” from NSSF’s *A Parent’s Guide to Recreational Shooting for Youngsters*:

“Not long ago, in another town, some kids found a firearm. Maybe they were looking for it because of something they saw on television. Maybe one of them dared the other to find it. Maybe they just found a firearm that was left out by mistake. It doesn’t matter why they found it. What matters is the firearm was loaded, and they played with it. Now they are very sorry they did. Don’t let this happen to you.”⁷⁶

The passage is striking, but not unique, in its ability to place blame, whether it be on television, negligent parents, or the kids themselves, on virtually anyone except the industry.

NSSF issues a constant stream of publications, both to support, and defend, the firearms industry in the marketing of its products. Recent NSSF marketing publications (some publicly available, others limited to NSSF industry members) include titles such as: *Millennials and The Shooting Sports: An In-Depth Exploration* (2014); *Understanding Diversity in Hunting and Shooting Sports* (2013); *Understanding the Impact of Peer Influence on Youth*



NSSF’s *Understanding Activities that Compete with Hunting and Target Shooting*

Participation in Hunting and Target Shooting (2012); and, *Understanding Activities that Compete with Hunting and Target Shooting* (2012).

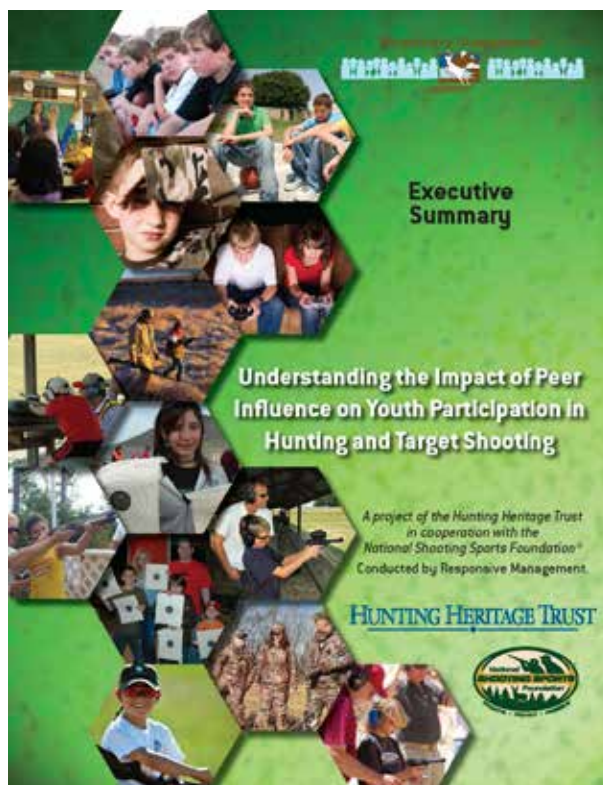
Among the “11 main points to consider” in the executive summary of the NSSF report *Understanding Activities that Compete with Hunting and Target Shooting* are “Electronic and indoor recreation are a threat to recruiting new hunters and target shooters,” “Losing hunters and target shooters to competing activities is a subtle process,” and, “Start them young.”⁷⁷

Discussing the “threat” posed by electronic and indoor recreation, the report presents findings “worth noting” from a 2010 study by the Kaiser Family Foundation: “It is estimated that today’s youth 8 to 18 years old spend an average of 53 hours a week on electronic media entertainment,” and, “Nearly three-quarters (71%) of youth have a television in their bedroom.” NSSF suggests, “Rather than trying to stop youth from using electronic media, the hunting and target shooting industry should use those media to its advantage.” “Tactical strategies” toward this end as cited in the report include:

- “The industry should use social media and web sites to raise interest and help youth find ways to hunt and target shoot.”
- “The industry should team with current online media firms to take advantage of their reach and their abilities to communicate with youth.”
- “Because youth are online to be entertained, messages that emphasize fun should be used in this setting.”⁷⁸

Under a section titled “Start Them Young,” the report states, “There is a clear link between avidity and age of initiation in hunting....”⁷⁹ “Tactical strategies regarding initiation” detailed in the study include:

- “To help hunting and target shooting get a head start over other activities, stakeholders such as managers and manufacturers should target programs toward youth 12 years old and younger. This is the time that youth are being targeted with competing activities.”
- “It is important to consider more hunting and target shooting recruitment programs aimed at middle school level, or earlier.”
- “Programs that have helped in hunting and target shooting recruitment should be implemented; for instance, it is important to implement more youth programs like *Families Afield*⁸⁰ and apprentice licenses.”⁸¹



NSSF's *Understanding the Impact of Peer Influence on Youth Participation in Hunting and Target Shooting*, Executive Summary

Recognizing that “not all youth can be born into the ideal environment for creating a lifelong hunter or shooter (i.e., as a male within a hunting or shooting family in a rural environment),”⁸² the 2012 report *Understanding the Impact of Peer Influence on Youth Participation in Hunting and Target Shooting* urges that a “‘Youth Hunter and Shooter Ambassador Program’ be initiated to capitalize on the current population of youth hunters and shooters who can positively influence their fellow peers’ attitudes toward the sports.”⁸³ The report, sponsored by both NSSF and the Hunting Heritage Trust, explains how such “youth ambassadors” would be “performing a major service for the hunting and shooting sport communities”—

“The more familiar youth are with individuals their own age who participate in hunting and shooting, the more likely they will be to support and actively participate in these activities. In this sense, youth hunters and shooters are the key to their fellow friends’ and students’ acceptance of these activities. Given this direct relationship, it is imperative that youth hunters and shooters recognize the weight and importance of their words and actions with regard to their peers’ perceptions of hunting and target shooting...”

“If non-hunting and non-shooting students talk with, befriend, and interact with youth who are actively involved in hunting and shooting, the positive aspects of these activities will increasingly be thought of as acceptable, appealing, and inviting recreational activities.”⁸⁴

The report also urged the use of social media, noting:

“[T]alk and communication about hunting and shooting should be encouraged and promoted in as many ways as possible, especially through social media. One individual from the [youth] focus groups mentioned photos a hunting classmate had posted on Facebook — as with this individual, such photos tend to encourage questions, invite curiosity, increase interest, and place hunting and shooting activities in the foreground of the social atmosphere. Youth, in particular, are uniquely positioned to take advantage of the most prominent and effective means of social media and other communication tools — hunting and shooting sponsoring agencies and organizations should encourage this tendency wherever possible. In promoting the use of images, remember that pictures are often worth a thousand words: images promoting hunting and shooting should reinforce a positive atmosphere that emphasizes the environment, nature, the outdoors, nice weather, exercise, natural resources, wildlife, a social atmosphere among friends and peer groups, etc.”⁸⁵

The report also urged that “youth ambassadors and others should focus on getting newcomers to take a first step into target shooting through any means, whether a BB or pellet gun, paintball gun, or archery bow. The point should be to get newcomers started shooting *something*, with the natural next step being a move toward actual firearms. Initial interest, however, should be embraced in whatever form it presents itself.”⁸⁶

THE INDUSTRY FINDS ITS “‘REALITY’ VIDEO GAME” IN 3-GUN COMPETITION

In the competition for the recreation time of youth, video games are seen by the gun industry as both a threat to, and an opportunity for, marketing firearms to youth.

Bud Pidgeon, president of the U.S. Sportsmen’s Alliance warns, “By the time kids are in fifth grade, or even before, they’re already being pulled away by the allure of video games, organized sports or other activities.”⁸⁷ And an article detailing NSSF’s 2015 Shooting Sports Summit warned, “What those young people appear to be most interested in, at least superficially, is playing computer games, tapping on tiny keyboards and communicating with their friends through social media like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and other websites.”⁸⁸



Photo from the website of the Tri County Gun Club in Polo, Illinois, illustrating firearms and accessories needed for 3-Gun competition

Yet while video games are seen as a competitor for the leisure time of children, the argument is frequently made, both inside and outside the industry, that first-person shooter games, and their use of easily identified real-world weapons, offer marketing opportunities.

According to Ralph Vaughn, who negotiates licensing deals with video game manufacturers on behalf of Barrett Firearms, manufacturer of 50 caliber anti-armor sniper rifles as well as assault rifles, “It is hard to qualify to what extent rifle sales have increased as a result of being in games...But video games expose our brand to a young audience who are considered possible future owners.”⁸⁹

In a column on the website *Gun Nuts Media*, author Caleb Giddings discusses the guns used in the latest edition of the video game series *Battlefield*. After discussing the video, he concludes:

“There is a real point to all this digital nonsense though, and something that I saved for last. This game and games like it are absolutely how the next generation of gun owners are getting introduced to firearms. The incredible amounts of realism present in the depiction of firearms in game is a good thing. I guarantee that people will come into gun ranges and say ‘I shot something just like that in *Battlefield*!’ The immediate response of any employee of any range in the nation should be ‘that’s awesome! Want to try the real deal?’”⁹⁰

Among the concurring statements in the comments section of the article⁹¹ were:

- “I agree 100% that games like this can increase the number of ‘gun people.’ In the range I work in, It’s very common to have younger people ask to see then rental guns, and can name many of them off (Beretta 92, AR, Glock, 1911, etc.) based on game experience. Then they get to try one for real and most of them are hooked! I don’t know if it’s what the game designers intended, but it works.”

- “Though gaming may be more realistic when it comes to firearms and operating, like you said, many people are being introduced to firearms through mediums like this. It is always great that video game devs would put a lot of attention to detail when it comes to subjects like this and seeing them play out IRL [In Real Life]...”
- “The last generation of games have a big influence on the purchasing decisions of prospective gun owners of a certain age. I dare say that half of the PS90s sold are probably because of *Counter-Strike*, and I think it’s responsible for some of the demand for Beretta Elites, as well.”

As accessory manufacturer Firefield sums it up: “A majority of Firefield users grew up watching action-packed movies, TV shows and playing interactive video games that encompass tactical gear and military-style weapons platforms. Our optics and shooting accessories allow shooters to turn what they’ve seen on the screen into a reality.”⁹²

In 2007, Chris Dolnack, National Shooting Sports Foundation senior vice president, used the term “a ‘reality’ video game” to describe the organization’s Scholastic Rifle Program (SRP) begun in 2003, telling *Junior Shooters* magazine, “We developed an action-packed reactive target format — a ‘reality’ video game — that is sure to be a hit with today’s young shooter.”⁹³ While the Scholastic Rifle Program apparently failed to fill that niche, another industry-promoted shooting event has: 3-Gun competition.



Video from *The Truth About Guns* shows a 3-Gun participant ready to start the competition

Writing at the website *The Truth About Guns*, Nick Leghorn promises, “3-gun is as close to a real-life first person shooter video game as you’ll get without joining the military.”⁹⁴ As described by Leghorn:

“3-gun gets its name from the fact that you use three different types of firearms over the course of the competition: a shotgun, a rifle, and a pistol. You score points by hitting designated targets, which include clay pigeons, cardboard silhouettes, steel targets of varying sizes, and anything else the Range Officer designates as a target....Competitors lose points for hitting ‘no shoot’ targets (hostages, friendlies, etc) or skipping targets/obstacles. Their score is augmented by the time it takes to complete the course of fire. The person with the combination of fastest time and best accuracy wins.”⁹⁵

In a video accompanying the article showing a shooter preparing for a 3-Gun match, a participant is asked, “How are you going to game this stage knowing nothing about it?” He replies, “I think it’s kinda like [the video game] *Doom*, run through, keep upgrading weapons as you kill bad guys, right?”⁹⁶

Such competitions frequently revolve around fantasy scenarios in which firepower is essential for the hero-shooter to emerge victorious. In its description of its 3-Gun Tactical Match, one gun club explains:

“This type of match has the shooter shooting centerfire rifle, centerfire pistol, and shotgun (.410 or larger) at paper ‘bad guy,’ steel plates, and similar targets. In any given scenario, the shooter moves through

an imaginary situation in which his life is placed in danger by the 'bad guys.' The scenario will vary from month to month, and will have a theme that practices real-life shooting and defensive skills. Examples of scenarios: exodus from a shopping mall overrun with terrorists, self defense at an ATM machine, Hollywood bank robbery, L.A. riots, home intruder, etc."⁹⁷

In the video cited above, the "scenario" is spelled out for the 3-Gun participant as he's led hooded, his wrists tied together, into a faux prison cell and seated (see photo on previous page):

"Okay all you troopers are such badasses you decided you were going to go hunt pirates in Somalia... Something went wrong and you are now the prisoner of a Somali warlord who wants to do very bad things to you because you're an American...No one's coming to rescue you so you have to rescue yourself... During your last interrogation you noticed that the chair was rough on the sides. That might assist you in breaking your bonds should you be given the opportunity...At that point you should find yourself a gun. Cause we're Americans and we all like guns. Find one and start killing all the bad guys who are trying to do very bad things to you and your fellow Americans."⁹⁸

In the pages of *Junior Shooters*, 3-Gun competitions are a mainstay, with child participants not only promoting the activity in its pages, but also lauding the gun companies that donate guns, ammunition, and other products: both for use in the activity and as prizes for the winners. As one article written by a 12- and 16-year-old states:

"Everything about 3-Gun is exactly the opposite of precision rifle. Precision to me is boring. All you do is stand there and shoot. With 3-Gun you get to 'get into it.' You get to run around (as long as you're safe), shoot 'big boy guns,' and go through obstacles shooting at the targets. Can it get any better? I think not. I felt like an FBI or a SWAT agent going in for a big bust. It was an awesome feeling."⁹⁹

Writing in *Junior Shooters*, Corey Shaw, age 17, exulted:

"This summer I had the opportunity to shoot Fabrique Nationale Herstal (FNH) USA's SCAR. SCAR is an acronym for Special Combat Assault Rifle. And, oh, boy, is it SPECIAL!"

"Due to the fact that the SCAR is so light, you can fling it around from target to target; sometimes it feels more like you're shooting a .22 rather than a full-on combat rifle."^{100 101}

In a *Junior Shooters* article titled, "Why I Love 3-Gun!," 12-year-old Jake Denno writes:

"Besides the three guns that have to be practiced with and brought to the match, many of the 3-Gun events will have special or stage weapons, as well...I have already been fortunate enough to be able to shoot a fully automatic UZI, an M-249 SAW and an M-203 grenade launcher. Some of the other special weapons in 3-Gun matches include MG-42 and M-60 machine guns, suppressed ARs and SCARs, but the one I really want to shoot is the Dillon Mini-Gun at the Larue Tactical match. Some events will also have manufacturers there who will have their pistols and shotguns as stage weapons. The only thing I do not like about stage and special weapons is that the score depends on how one shoots with an unfamiliar weapon. The triggers and sights are usually really different from what I shoot, and the guns don't always run well. At the Ironman [competition], the UZI just would not function properly, and it really threw me off my plan for that stage."¹⁰²

Four New Shooters Challenge the Ironman

JUNIOR SHOOTERS

Volume 12 / Summer 2012

MAKING A MARK



Scholastic Clay
Target Program

Ruger's New .22
Revolvers

Building a Modern
Sporting Rifle

Crosman MAR177 PCP

Youngest Fastest
Gun Alive

Display until 11/29/12
#110023 Summer 2012
\$6.99



0 71486 02122 3

JUNIORSHOOTERS.NET

Summer 2012 Junior Shooters features 3-Gun competitors

Like the gun industry and gun lobby's ongoing campaign to attempt to rebrand assault rifles as "Modern Sporting Rifles," by labeling 3-Gun competitions a "sport," their hope is to not only engage young shooters, but also that the activity offers the necessary cover to maintain the sale and possession of weapons that were originally designed for military or law enforcement use, including assault weapons that should be banned for import under the "sporting purposes" test of the Gun Control Act of 1968.¹⁰³ As Michael Tenny, CEO of Cheaper Than Dirt!, an online vendor of guns, ammunition, and accessories that describes itself as "America's Ultimate Shooting Sports Discounter," told *Junior Shooters*, "We're always happy to be able to support the shooting sports in any way possible, and we're even more excited to help encourage new shooters by sponsoring the 3 Gun Nation Junior division...Faced with political pressure to ban the importation of the competition shotguns that have made 3-Gun into the sport it is today, I think it's critical that we as an industry pull together to support all of the shooting sports in any way we can."¹⁰⁴

THE REALITY OF CHILDREN AND GUNS

Much like the tobacco industry before it, the firearms industry — gun and accessory manufacturers, trade associations (both self-proclaimed, such as the NSSF, and *de facto*, such as the National Rifle Association) and related publications — consistently denies the risk associated with its products, especially in the marketing of guns to children. As noted earlier, their arguments, such as NSSF's assertion that hunting is safer than bowling, can at times be so divorced from reality that they cross the line from the absurd to the surreal.

Despite the rosy picture painted by the firearms industry, the combination of children and firearms poses risks that are widely recognized. These include death and injury, not just from unintentional shootings, virtually the sole category of firearm death acknowledged by the gun industry, but suicide and homicide. In addition, the exposure to lead that young shooters experience — either when firing a weapon or making their own ammunition, a practice commonly known as "hand loading" — can harm many different body organs and systems, including the brain, and exposure can lead to reduced intelligence as well as behavioral problems.

YOUTH GUN DEATHS

In 2014, more than 1,300 children under the age of 18 died from firearms: 699 homicides, 532 suicides, 74 unintentional shootings,¹⁰⁵ and 19 from undetermined intent. From 1999 to 2014, nearly 23,000 children under the age of 18 died from guns: 13,756 homicides, 6,903 suicides, 1,723 unintentional shootings, and 395 from undetermined intent.¹⁰⁶

For the age group one to 17 in 2014, unintentional injury was the leading cause of death, the most common cause of unintentional death being motor vehicle-related deaths (49 percent) and drownings (18 percent). Firearms accounted for two percent of all fatal unintentional injuries. Malignant neoplasms (primarily cancers) were second. Suicide was the third leading cause of death. Guns accounted for 40 percent of these deaths, making firearms the second most popular method of suicide for this age group, behind suffocation. Homicide was the fourth leading cause of death for this age group, with firearms being used in 59 percent of all homicides.¹⁰⁷

TABLE THREE: FIREARM DEATHS IN THE UNITED STATES, LESS THAN 18 YEARS OF AGE, 1999 - 2014¹⁰⁸

Year	Homicide	Suicide	Unintentional	Undetermined Intent	Total
1999	1,001	558	158	50	1,767
2000	819	537	150	23	1,529
2001	835	451	125	16	1,427
2002	872	423	115	26	1,436
2003	805	377	102	25	1,309
2004	868	384	105	22	1,379
2005	921	412	127	25	1,485
2006	1,082	371	102	24	1,579
2007	1,038	325	112	36	1,511
2008	984	361	98	26	1,469
2009	887	401	83	16	1,387
2010	835	375	98	26	1,334
2011	730	448	102	23	1,303
2012	740	457	78	15	1,290
2013	640	491	94	23	1,248
2014	699	532	74	19	1,324
Total	13,756	6,903	1,723	395	22,777

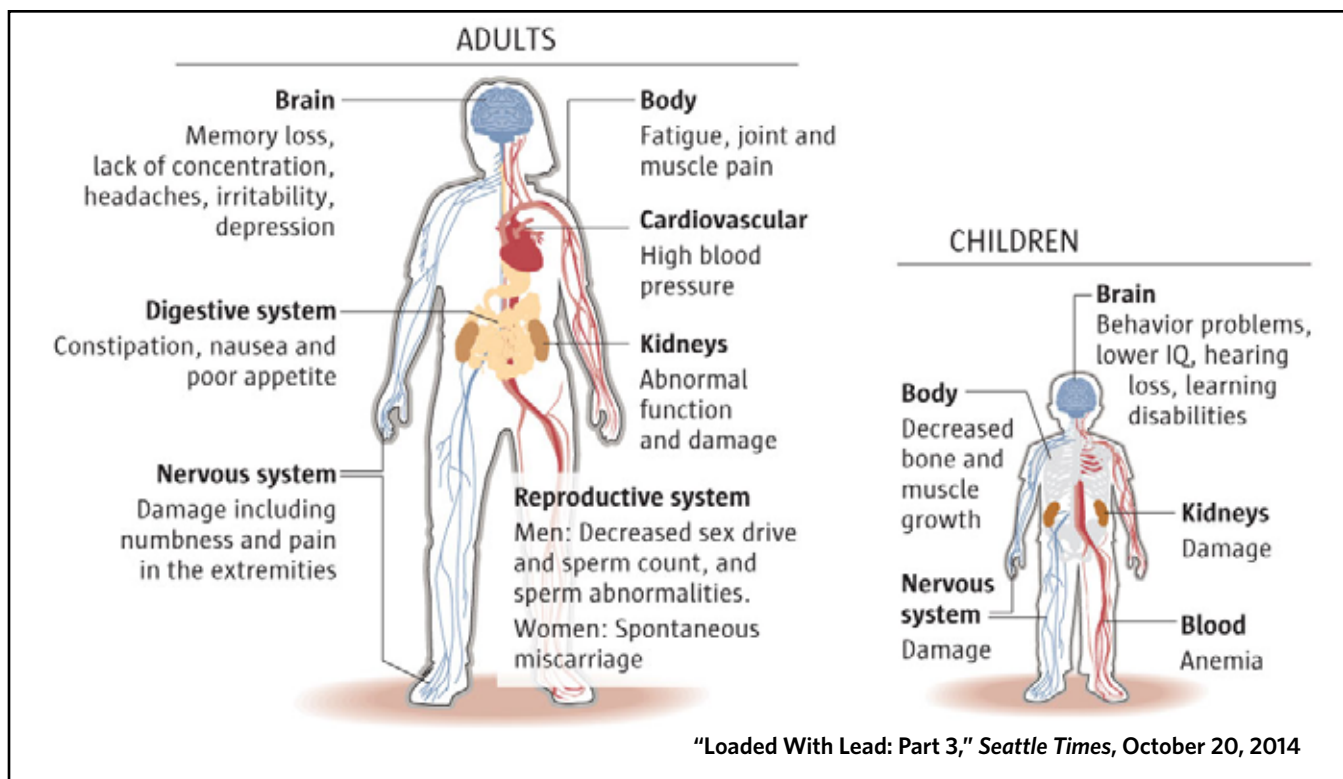
A common myth is that children and teens living in rural areas do not suffer the effects of gun violence experienced by their contemporaries who live in urban environments, despite being exposed to guns at a young age. The fact is that guns kill rural youth at a rate equal to urban youth but in different circumstances. While more urban youth die from gun homicide, the difference is made up in rural areas through firearm suicide and unintentional deaths. A 2010 study in the *American Journal of Pediatrics* examined all pediatric firearm deaths up to age 19 from 1999 through 2006. The deaths were analyzed by rural-urban settings based on population size and proximity to metropolitan areas. The study concluded:

“Children in the most-rural US counties had firearm mortality rates that were statistically indistinguishable from those for children in the most-urban counties. This finding reflects a greater homicide rate in urban counties counterbalanced by greater suicide and unintentional firearm death rates in rural counties.”¹⁰⁹

Parents also have significant ability to prevent youth suicide recognizing that adolescents who commit suicide most often use the family gun.¹¹⁰ By removing guns from homes where children and teens live, especially depressed adolescents, parents will reduce likelihood of suicide and unintentional death for everyone in the household, but especially for teens.

While 85 percent of suicide attempts with guns are fatal, other means are less lethal: only one percent of cutting or piercing attempts are fatal, while only two percent of poisoning/overdose attempts result in death.¹¹¹ Moreover,

studies show that many teen suicide attempts are impulsive. Of teens who survived a suicide attempt, one quarter said they thought of suicide just five minutes before making the attempt. There is also little truth to the widely held belief that those who attempt to kill themselves are determined to succeed. In fact, 90 percent of near-lethal suicide attempts do not attempt to kill themselves again.¹¹²



LEAD: THE SILENT HEALTH THREAT FROM FIREARMS

While the health and safety threats of gun violence can be measured in death and injury, there is another reason guns pose a grave threat to human health and particularly children’s health: the toxic lead found in ammunition.

Lead is a highly toxic metal that is especially harmful to the developing brains of young children. It can harm many different body organs and systems, and exposure can lead to reduced intelligence and many behavioral problems. The federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) maintains there is *no* safe level of lead in the blood for children, and states, “Even low levels of lead in blood have been show to affect IQ, ability to pay attention, and academic achievement.”^{113 114}

In recent decades, public health-based regulations have dramatically reduced the presence of lead in what were once common sources of exposure for children, such as lead-based paint and lead in gasoline. The major health threat that remains is lead from bullets. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) regulates lead in paint and gasoline but is prohibited from regulating the lead contained in cartridges and shells. The EPA has rejected a petition filed by 101 environmental organizations to regulate lead from spent bullets and shot citing a section of the Toxic Substances and Control Act (TSCA) that exempts cartridges and shells from the agency’s reach. Both the NRA and the NSSF intervened in court to object to EPA regulation of lead in ammunition.¹¹⁵ A 2013 consensus statement from scientists from across the nation warned: “Lead-based ammunition is likely the greatest, largely unregulated source of lead knowingly discharged into the environment in the United States.”¹¹⁶

For both children and adults, the primary risk of exposure comes from shooting ranges, most notably indoor ranges. At the firing range, children can be exposed to lead through particles suspended in the air or even by eating contaminated food. Even when children do not go to the firing range themselves, they can be contaminated by clothing or accessories from adults returning from the range.¹¹⁷ The CDC recommends that individuals “shower and change clothes after finishing a task that involves working with lead-based products, such as stained glass, making bullets, or using a firing range.”¹¹⁸

Yet despite the well-documented public health risk, shooting ranges remain a largely unregulated industry. A recent investigation in the *Seattle Times* revealed that shooting range owners routinely violate workplace safety laws, resulting in their employees as well as their children and adult customers being exposed to lead. The newspaper found that only 201 of the estimated 6,000 commercial gun ranges in the United States have been inspected within the past decade, but 86 percent of those which had been inspected violated at least one lead-related standard. Thousands more gun ranges are volunteer-led or members-only clubs with no employees, and these do not have to follow federal regulations at all.¹¹⁹ Not surprisingly, while the NRA and its self-described gun industry “corporate partners” will at times pay lip service to the safety hazards posed by lead, their overriding focus remains actively encouraging children to visit shooting ranges. As a medical officer for the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health told the *Seattle Times*, “Some firing ranges cater to children, they have birthday parties and special events.” An NRA official, Susan Recce, told the newspaper, “The issue of lead problems for indoor ranges is extremely rare.”¹²⁰

The facts state otherwise. At a Vancouver, Washington shooting range, tests in 2010 found 20 youth and young adults on the Rifle and Pistol Club team had been overexposed to lead. “We weren’t very cautious,” one of the participants was quoted as saying. “We would get lead on our hands and eat finger food.” Tests showed that the floor of the range had a lead level 993 times that allowed by a federal housing guideline.¹²¹

There is no cure or treatment for the effects of lead exposure, and the effects are chronic and irreversible. The only option is prevention. And yet, the response from all too many parents is to ignore the threat. In response to an online discussion thread titled “is 3 yrs old too young to help dad clean ar [AR-15 assault rifle]?,” one commenter responded:

“The whole lead, chemical paranoia is out of control IMO [in my opinion]. I grew up with lead paint, played with lead toy soldiers, dunked my hands in kerosene while cleaning car parts and used real MEK to degrease stuff. According to my doc I’m in good health aside from high cholesterol. Use common sense. Don’t let your kid drink Hoppe’s or Frog Lube. Don’t let him stick his hands in his mouth...He’s more likely to drown or get hurt at the playground than die for touching the bolt of a rifle once a week.”¹²²



This photo from the cover of a 1997 Browning firearms catalog ignores the threat lead poses to children

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The efforts of the gun industry and gun lobby to put firearms in the hands of young children and teens are the exact opposite of what health experts advise. The American Academy of Pediatrics is emphatic in urging parents not to keep guns in homes with children. Their healthychildren.org website advises parents, “The best way to keep your children safe from injury or death from guns is to NEVER have a gun in the home.” Specifically, the pediatricians’ organization warns parents as follows:¹²³

- Do not purchase a gun, especially a handgun.
- Remove all guns present in the home.
- Remember that young children simply do not understand how dangerous guns can be, despite parents’ warnings.
- Find out if there are guns in the homes where your children play. If so, talk to the adults in the house about the dangers of guns to their families.

“For those who know of the dangers of guns but still keep a gun in the home,” the site advises:

- Always keep the gun unloaded and locked up.
- Lock and store the bullets in a separate place.
- Make sure to hide the keys to the locked boxes.

As noted, one study found that adolescents who commit suicide most often use the family gun.¹²⁴ By removing guns from homes where children and teens live, especially depressed adolescents, parents will reduce likelihood of suicide and unintentional death for everyone in the household, but especially for teens.

A common argument is that giving children guns teaches them personal responsibility and other life skills. Typical is the language found on the website of National 4-H Shooting Sports, which promises “Skills for Life — Activity for a Lifetime.” Sponsors of the program include: the National Shooting Sports Foundation; online accessories and ammo vendor MidwayUSA (headed by top NRA donor Larry Potterfield); the ammunition manufacturer Hornady (headed by NRA board member Steve Hornady); and, Hodgdon Powder (headed by one-time NRA board member Bob Hodgdon). In the “Just for Youth” section under the heading “Kids ‘n’ Guns,” the site states:

“4-H uses shooting sports to teach youth development. Our programs are valuable for helping young people develop self-confidence, personal discipline, responsibility, teamwork, self esteem and sportsmanship. The discipline and self-control required for responsible firearms use carries over into many other aspects of life.”¹²⁵

In the same section, the question is asked, “Isn’t easy access to firearms one reason for the violent behavior we’ve seen in Columbine and other school shootings?” The response is as predictable as it is disingenuous: “No, access is not the issue. The safest location for a responsible gun owner to store a firearm is the secure environment of his or her home...Firearms should however, be stored so that they are inaccessible to unauthorized users.”

Left unstated is the fact that with the creation of the youth gun culture envisioned by the firearms industry and the gun lobby, the children themselves in the home are all too often the *authorized* users.

At the same time, the “skills” learned by youth at the foot of today’s gun industry — with its embrace of heightened lethality and increased militarization, combined with the immaturity and limited judgment that define childhood — can be put into action with horrific results.

In addition to urging that homes with children be gun-free, the Violence Policy Center recommends the following:

- Firearms are an adult product just like tobacco and alcohol and should be treated as such to protect the health and safety of children. Just as our society does not condone the use of alcohol or tobacco by minors even with adult supervision, we should prohibit the acquisition, possession, and use of firearms by children. Current federal law prohibits the transfer of handguns by Federal Firearms License (FFL) holders to anyone under the age of 21. Federal law also prohibits handgun possession by those under the age of 18 with a number of exceptions. Federally licensed dealers are also prohibited from selling long guns (shotguns and rifles) to those under the age of 18. These laws should be revised so that possession standards strictly match sales standards: 18 years old for long guns and 21 years old for handguns.
- The Federal Trade Commission should investigate whether the firearms industry is inappropriately marketing firearms to children and also whether manufacturers are engaged in product placement of firearms in video games marketed to minors to determine whether such efforts violate applicable advertising standards.
- Websites for gun manufacturers and vendors of related products (such as ammunition and ammunition magazines) should have the same age restrictions and criteria for access as those for tobacco and alcohol vendors.
- Congress should repeal the section of the Toxic Substances Control Act prohibiting the Environmental Protection Agency from regulating lead in ammunition.
- States should review their laws regarding firearm possession by children with the goal of having the age for legal possession at least match that for legal purchase from a Federal Firearms License holder.
- An effective public education campaign should be developed and implemented to warn parents and youth about the dangers associated with the presence and use of firearms.

To put the gun industry and gun lobby’s child-marketing efforts into perspective, imagine the public outcry if the alcohol industry announced a program targeting grade school children, promoting a line of “youth cocktails.” Or if the tobacco industry urged parents to introduce their second and third grade-age children to the satisfaction and sophistication of smoking with “junior cigarettes.” Or if it was revealed that these industries had a “strategic plan” targeting children to not only “start them young,” but to create a cadre of “youth ambassadors,” whose goal would be to convince their playmates via personal contact and social media to join them in these adult activities. Yet, the firearms industry and gun lobby are today aggressively pursuing just such a campaign targeting America’s youth.

And while the firearms industry and gun lobby consistently work to present this marketing effort in terms of tradition and family, the real impetus lies in profit and political power. Most tragically, the effects of this campaign are all too often measured in unnecessary death and crippling injury.

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98. "Competition Shooting 101: 3-Gun," *The Truth About Guns*, April 8, 2011
(<http://www.thetruthaboutguns.com/2011/04/foghorn/competition-shooting-101-3-gun/>).
99. "So, You Think You Want to Try 3-Gun," *Junior Shooters*, Spring 2012.
100. "FNH Has All 4 Guns for 3-Gun!," *Junior Shooters*, Summer 2011.
101. According to FN's website, "Early 2004, United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) issued a solicitation for a family of Special Forces Combat Assault Rifles, the so-called SCAR, designed around two different calibers but featuring high commonality of parts and identical ergonomics. FN Herstal took part in the full and open competition and released prototypes of a brand new family of weapons within timeframe taking advantage of our long-standing firearms know-how" (http://www.fnherstal.com/primary-menu/products-capabilities/rifles/general/product/182/232/182/1/_/fn-scarR-l-std.html).
102. "Why I Love 3-Gun!," *Junior Shooters*, March 2011 Special Edition.

103. The federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) can fully exercise its existing statutory authority to exclude from importation all semiautomatic assault rifles as “non-sporting” weapons pursuant to 18 USC §925(d)(3) (a provision of the 1968 Gun Control Act) and also exclude the importation of assault weapon kits and parts sets. This policy was first implemented in 1989 by the George H.W. Bush administration in response to drug wars and mass shootings in the U.S. The Clinton administration strengthened the import rules in 1998 in response to efforts by the gun industry to evade the ban, but the policy was essentially abandoned by the George W. Bush administration with limited activity since.
104. “Junior Prizes in Place for 3 Gun Nation Tour,” *Junior Shooters*, Special Edition, 2011.
105. In an in-depth investigation published in 2013, *The New York Times* reviewed hundreds of child firearm deaths and found that unintentional shootings occur roughly twice as often as federal records indicate because of idiosyncrasies in how such deaths are classified by authorities (for example, an unintentional shooting being classified as a homicide). According to the *Times*, “The undercount stems from the peculiarities by which medical examiners and coroners make their ‘manner of death’ rulings. These pronouncements, along with other information entered on death certificates, are the basis for the nation’s mortality statistics, which are assembled by the National Center for Health Statistics, a division of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Choosing among five options — homicide, accidental, suicide, natural or undetermined — most medical examiners and coroners simply call any death in which one person shoots another a homicide.” “Children and Guns: The Hidden Toll,” *The New York Times*, September 28, 2013 (<http://www.nytimes.com/2013/09/29/us/children-and-guns-the-hidden-toll.html?pagewanted=all&r=0>).
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(<http://www.motherjones.com/environment/2013/01/lead-crime-link-gasoline>); Jessica Wolpaw Reyes, "Environmental Policy as Social Policy? The Impact of Childhood Lead Exposure on Crime," National Bureau of Economic Research Working Papers, May 2007 (<http://www.nber.org/papers/w13097>); and, Rick Nevin, "Understanding international crime trends: The legacy of preschool lead exposure," *Environmental Research* 104 (2007) 315-336 (<http://pic.plover.com/Nevin/Nevin2007.pdf>).

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