

SHOOTINGS

Continued from Page 1A

be practiced over and over, he said.

“Most people, cops included, don’t devote that practice time to be able to shoot it responsibly or carry it responsibly,” he said.

The AP’s investigation found six accidental shootings that involved officers responding to reports of active shooters.

In 2016, for example, local, state and federal officers rushed to Alpine High School in the small town of Alpine, Texas, when a call came in about two shooters inside.

A half-dozen heavily armed officers and agents headed toward the cafeteria and then down the hallway toward classroom No. 24, thinking the shooter might be inside.

Just as Homeland Security Investigations Special Agent Jon Dangle touched the doorknob, a shot rang out, and he fell to the floor. The other officers grabbed him by his bulletproof vest and dragged him to safety.

No one knew where the shot came from or who fired it, Dangle said.

“We thought the shooter was in that classroom,” which still contained a teacher and students, he told the AP. “If they (the other agents) had opened fire, more would be dead.”

U.S. Marshal Douglas Mullens eventually admitted he had accidentally discharged his weapon. He was carrying a ballistic shield in one hand and fumbling with a handgun in the other when it went off, according to the Texas Rangers, who investigated the shooting.

Dangle suffered a shattered tibia and torn muscles and nerves. He was out of work for 15 months and eventually moved his family to Oklahoma so he could get better care.

Dave Oney, a spokesman for the



The Associated Press

In this still frame image from video provided by the Texas Rangers and recorded on Sept. 8, 2016, armed law enforcement officers move through a hallway at Alpine High School in Alpine, Texas, while responding to a shooting at the school. A Homeland Security Investigations special agent was wounded during the response after a gun carried by U.S. Marshal Douglas Mullens, upper-right, accidentally discharged.

U.S. Marshals Service, said the agency “does not discuss personnel matters” when asked if Mullens faced any disciplinary action or charges.

Other accidental shootings at schools occurred while officers chased or arrested suspects, taught gun safety classes, or attended school events while off-duty, the AP found. Some injured officers, teachers or students.

One happened the day after the mass shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, when a sheriff’s deputy shot himself in the leg while responding to a report of a person with a gun at a school in neighboring Coconut Creek.

Accidental shootings can occur when an officer is flush with adrenaline, gets startled or simply loses his balance. Ways to avoid them include following firearms safety rules and training regularly and in settings that mirror real life, experts say.

Steven Karnazes, president of Ventura, California-based Advanced Tactical Training Institute, trains people in schools and churches to prepare for armed attacks. After taking clients through classroom safety sessions, Karnazes teaches firearm handling by “making things as realistic as we can.”

“If you are a person at a church or school and you want to carry a firearm, that commitment comes

with a lot of responsibility,” he said. “You have to be a lifelong student and continue to train.”

Alan Gottlieb, founder of the Bellevue, Washington-based Second Amendment Foundation, supports arming teachers as a way to prevent violence, saying gun-free school zones are a “target-rich environment for people who are crazy.”

He believes the average gun owner engages in more training than police due to budget constraint, and says trained school personnel could do a better job of protecting students.

Yet many educators have resisted the idea that they should carry guns.

National advocacy group Teach

Plus in 2018 surveyed more than 1,200 teachers about being armed at schools, and 80% said they were strongly opposed.

Also last year, the National Education Association, the country’s largest teachers union, asked roughly 1,000 members if they would be willing to carry a gun in school, even with training, and 82% said no.

“We reject the idea that putting more guns in schools will make schools safer,” the group’s president, Lily Eskelsen García, told the AP. “If a highly trained law enforcement officer can accidentally fire a weapon, let’s talk about the third-grade teacher with a loaded pistol in her purse.”

SNAP

Continued from Page 1A

the Community Connection of Northeast Oregon’s regional food bank, based in La Grande, said she believes the new rule could have a dire impact on northeast Oregon residents.

“I’m very worried about how our houseless population might be impacted,” Smith said.

She noted the new rule means people who are struggling to get enough to eat and do not have a residence are not in a position to successfully obtain the employment they will need to retain their SNAP benefits.

“Being hungry and not having a home address does not help you ace a job interview,” Smith said, noting people are not at their best when they do not have adequate nutrition.

Smith said people who do not have homes will also be hit hard by this rule because they do not have the ability to cook or store food, so they will have to buy more expensive ready-to-eat food items.

The new SNAP rule will apply only to those who are “able-bodied,” but Smith said those who appear to be well and capable of working are not always in a position to hold down a job.

“They may have hidden disabilities, which may keep them from being eligible for jobs,” she said.

Smith also said this will especially impact individuals living in smaller communities. For example, the food pantries in Union County’s smaller towns are often open only one day a month, while in La Grande they are open once a week.

Recipients of SNAP benefits in Union, Wallowa, Baker and Umatilla counties receive an average of less than

\$4 a day. The average SNAP benefit amount in Union County each month is \$113.18. The average is \$114.69 in Wallowa County, \$112.40 in Baker County, and \$110.44 in Umatilla County, according to 2019 DHS statistics.

Fariborz Pakseresht, director of the Oregon Department of Human Services, also is alarmed about the effects of the new rule.

“SNAP plays a critical role in addressing hunger and food insecurity,” Pakseresht said. “SNAP benefits assist Oregonians during difficult times to help make ends meet, in particular those working low-wage jobs or who are between jobs. For those already facing difficult circumstances, this rule exacerbates those circumstances. It also will result in an increased burden on food banks and other community resources to fill the void.”

FILM

Continued from Page 1A

make a film that benefits the community and our region,” Hill and O’Dell said.

Hill and O’Dell often talked at the same time, interjecting and finishing each other’s sentences.

The community in northeast Oregon also is supporting the film by giving their time and talents as crew and cast members. According to Hill and O’Dell, the production team has recruited more than 30 people from La Grande, Pendleton and Baker City, including performers, designers and caterers. The team is looking for around 80 actors to serve as extras and featured performers. They plan to begin filming in the spring of 2020, and most of the filming will take place on weekends to avoid schedule conflicts.

After filming, post production and editing will take about three to five months, and the movie will premiere at EOFF 2020 with plans to submit a final product by 2021 to film festivals, including EOFF.

Hill and O’Dell met while attending Eastern Oregon University and began working together on theater



Photo by Kathy Aney/EO Media Group

Kate Brizendine talks to the directors of “Out of Character” during a casting call at the Pendleton Center for the Arts.

projects until they both graduated with degrees in theater. After college, they reconnected in New York and each eventually moved back to Eastern Oregon.

“During my time at the college I received national awards for radio ads I created and narrated,” said Hill, who lives in Pendleton and works as a college recruitment coordinator. “This sparked my need to create more and led me to this idea. I had heard Liberty moved back to the area when I was working on the idea for the film, and I gave him a call. And here we are.”

O’Dell moved to New York after attending Eastern Oregon U to study acting and created SecondHand Theater Company, a group specializing in short films and self-created collaborative works. He moved back to La Grande to help run his family’s business, the La Grande Liquor and Smoke Shoppe.

“I am passionate about self-created work, and creation through collaboration, so when J.J. approached me with an idea for creating such a grand work, with so many connections to the community and area, I could not resist,” O’Dell said.

This new effort has turned out well for them.

“Working on this project is one of the most fulfilling artistic expressions of my career, and I am supremely lucky to be working on it with such a collaborative spirit,” O’Dell said of Hill. “I believe that every endeavor can be made greater through synergy and collaboration. J.J. brings such a sense of humor and humanity to the project, and he manages to keep most of my excessive ideas at bay.”

While they have worked together before, this is the first time either Hill and O’Dell has attempted to make a full-length feature film. The biggest issue they seem to have is finding enough people to work behind the camera. However, with more crew calls in the works, they hope to fill that need.

“What is easy to forget is just how complicated a film project can be. Between continuity, script edits, directing, photography, lighting, sound, effects, blocking, weather and cast management there are a lot of jobs and positions available that we need to fill,” O’Dell said. “We are invested in finding talented and passionate collaborators.”

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