

OPINION

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Sun-Tribune

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Gun education only answer

Re: *Gun violence has cops on alert, Aug. 11.*

As far as I know, this is the first time anyone has admitted and said what so many people in their right mind have known for years.

There is an emerging sub-culture where it's cool to have a gun. And that comes from what's on TV, movies, in videos and video games.

Too many people think a gun is the way to resolve the issue, said York Regional Police Chief Armand La Barge.

Now, if he could only get himself to admit that more than one billion dollars was wasted on gun control by registering farmers', sport shooters' and hunters' long rifles, even if they don't work.

Can anyone imagine how many police we could have hired to stop illegal guns from coming across the border with that money?

Handguns have been registered in Canada since 1932. That shows how great the system works.

My God, what a waste of money by our Liberal government in Ottawa. Even to give young people the opportunity to hold a gun on a controlled shooting range would make most of them turn away from guns for good.

There used to be a time when teenagers received shooting lessons at school. Now, there are very few shooting ranges left, thanks to our government.

As in many other instances, some laws have

a devastating effect.

Farmers and hunters tried to tell the government but the politicians wouldn't listen. Now, we have a list of victims of recent gun violence.

Guns will always be with us, just like smoking, alcohol and sex. We had better get used to that idea and do something about it, and do it right this time. Gun education is the only answer.

HEINZ NITSCHKE
MARKHAM

Human spirit prevailed

On Aug. 19, we watched from our office the water rise from the freak storm passing through.

As the water flooded the Centre Street Plaza, cars trying to drive through the flood seized up. Next door, Quiznos had a major water leak from the roof and their employees were outside.

No sooner did a car get stuck, than people from both businesses rushed out in knee-high water and pushed them to safety. We then herded them into our office until they could get help.

At one time, we had at least 30 adults and children in our office taking refuge. What a sight. Hugs and kisses of thanks were plentiful. The human spirit displayed by many young people during this event was extraordinary.

Did Mother Nature have this in mind when she threw this at us?

ROCHELLE RODNEY
THORNHILL CRUISESHIPCENTERS



Branding children begins earlier than ever

Would you let your kids play in a swamp?

Odds are, most parents would balk at such a notion today. After all, a swamp seems so dirty and teeming with who knows what.

But if not a swamp, what about a forest or a creek — even a back yard? What worlds are children exploring today and what are they learning from them?

When I was a boy, my playground was a swamp near my home in southern Ontario. I spent countless hours there, catching tadpoles and wading through cattails, delighting at each new discovery. As a result, I could easily name dozens of species of birds, fish and insects.

This was my world and it shaped who I am today.

But while my world was full of nature's delights, today's children face a world dominated by consumer delights.

Instead of a real swamp, their world is often virtual, consisting more of television, video games and the Internet. Each of these technologies wields tremendous

power and children can learn a great deal with them.

What they learn, however, is not necessarily what we intend.

Advertising certainly existed when I was growing up, but it was nothing close to the saturation levels faced by children today.

In my swamp, there were no billboards. Frogs did not croak

Most two to three-year-olds recognized eight out of 12 logos and the majority of eight-year-olds recognized 100 per cent of them, including Camel cigarettes and Heineken beer.

"Coke." Birds did not pull banner ads. The swamp was not sponsored by an oil company. And I was blissfully free of the consumer messages that bombard children in the 21st century.



David Suzuki

So while I learned the names of other living creatures, kids today are far more likely to learn the names of various products and popular brands.

And, according to new research, this constant assault of brand imagery is reaching our children at earlier and earlier ages.

A recent study, published in the Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology, has found children as young as two are now able to recognize common brand names.

Researchers tested some 200 Dutch children, presenting them with common logos such as McDonald's, Nike, Mercedes and

Cheetos. Most two to three-year-olds recognized eight out of 12 logos and the majority of eight-year-olds recognized 100 per cent of them, including Camel cigarettes and Heineken beer.

Researchers found one of the strongest correlations with higher brand recognition scores was a child's exposure to television. Generally, the more television a child watched, the more readily he or she was able to recognize brands.

This makes sense, given television's power as a visual medium.

But the researchers also point out their results should be a warning about the potential for advertising to influence the most impressionable minds.

Advertising to infants and toddlers is a rapidly growing trend. Just 10 years ago, most marketers only targeted children over age six.

Today, with the success of toddler-based television shows such as Teletubbies, researchers say infants and toddlers have been identified as a "vital and undeniable target group".

In fact, the authors argue marketers have already done their own research about the cognitive and behavioural effects of advertising on young children.

In most cases, however, the results have not been made available to academics or policy makers. In other words, marketers aren't just incidentally targeting some of the most vulnerable members of society — they are actively targeting them, and then keep quiet about it.

Children of the 21st century are growing up in a world much different than the one I faced. In some ways, they have more opportunities than my generation ever did.

But they also face new problems and threats that we never would have imagined.

Given the insidious nature of some of those threats, maybe a swamp isn't such a bad place to play after all.

Take the Nature Challenge and learn more at www.davidsuzuki.org

LETTERS POLICY

The Sun-Tribune welcomes your letters. Submissions must be less than 400 words and include a daytime telephone number, name and address. The Sun-Tribune reserves the right to publish or not publish and edit for clarity and space.

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