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Following yet another mass shooting, we called for Congress to take actions that don't hamper gun rights but reduce the opportunities for villains to kill. We see no need for a person who is not currently deployed to a combat zone to own automatic weapons or excessively large ammunition magazines.

YOUR TURN

Trick-or-treat

I am grateful to live in this loving community where so many volunteer their time and energy to help kids and families have a safe and fun Halloween. I must admit, however, I am disappointed to see the slow erosion of Trick-or-Treat by events that are taking Oct. 31 out of the neighborhood. We have every other day to spend at festivals or with our self-selected groups, but Halloween is the day we spend with our neighbors, right where we live.

Consider the uniqueness of Trick-or-Treat. It's the one night a year, which by universal agreement, a lit porch light equals free candy and treats. It's the one night when children flood the streets, travel by foot and roam their neighborhoods freely. With our over-scheduled lives, when else does that happen? The proliferation of special events on Halloween night means another night riding in the car, away from home, and porch lights become fewer and farther between. Those participants who do remain often travel from house-to-far-away-house by car, a dangerous dance in the dark for all. In my trick-or-treating heyday (the 1980s "Just say no." era), it was trendy to get candy x-rayed at the local hospital (for free. Hilarious.) to insure no razor blades or drugs were in them.

Now what are we afraid of? Traffic? That fear is quickly becoming a self-fulfilling prophecy. Ever so slowly, we are teaching our children that Halloween is a motorized holiday and that our neighbors and neighborhoods are not safe. We are making that a reality by turning off our lights, drawing our curtains and driving as fast and as far from our homes as we can. Trunk-or-Treats and Fall Festivals are wonderful, community-building activities where lots of candy and fun is to be had, but there is nothing else we do all year that is like Trick-or-Treat.

Next year, I hope everyone will consider turning on their porch lights at home on October 31 (maybe while watching another Astros World Series.), and greeting their costumed neighbors screaming joyfully for sugar at the front door. What could be easier or more fun?

Mary Turner, Nacogdoches

Voice your opinion

The Daily Sentinel welcomes letters on any subject that might be of interest to our readers. Keep letters to 350 words or less.

How do I send a letter?

Email: Send to Debi Ryan, publisher, at dryan@daily sentinel.com;
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NISD plant services helps keep our schools running

BY RALPH LARUE
Contributing Writer

The responsibilities of the Plant Service Department for NISD extend into nearly every facet of operations for the school district.

The department is separated into four subdivisions: Maintenance with 13 employees; Grounds with 10 employees; Custodial with 55 employees; and Shipping and Receiving with three employees. Work takes place in 1.18 million square feet of space in 94 structures sitting on 300 acres with 10 primary campuses.

Maintenance takes care of typical building upkeep with an in-house electrician, plumber, carpenter, HVAC crew and appliance/kitchen repair.

Maintenance personnel are dispatched through a computerized system that sends work orders to each individual. Additionally, maintenance personnel are supplemented with Nacogdoches-area vendors and trades who do a wonderful job for the district.

Grounds has a three-person crew at NHS, two three-person crews that each work several campuses and one person at McMichael Middle School. The crews' primary job is to care for the grounds, cutting grass and general clean up. These crews are also move all furniture and handle all heavy deliveries. They also supplement trades such as pulling wire or digging water lines.

The custodial subdivision is the largest and covers

day and evening shifts. The day shift works while all the students and academic staff work. Day shift personnel try to keep up with cleaning hallways, restrooms and cafeteria. Breakfast and lunch served daily at campuses generates a tremendous amount of trash, and the custodial department cleans the cafeteria following each meal.

The custodial evening shift works mostly in schools during times when there are fewer students and staff on hand. Most schools have something going on during the evening, but those activities do not fill each classroom, making it easier for cleaning crews to complete jobs.

Special events also keep the custodial staff busy. It is the custodial staff responsibility for opening buildings for evening or weekend events.

Shipping and receiving is a small subdivision that works with every school, every day, picking up U.S. mail, sorting and delivering it to each campus and facility. The warehouse also receives FedEx, UPS, common carrier and all ground transportation deliveries, processing and getting them out to the required locations. Along with the limited staff of shipping and receiving, once a week a grounds crew helps with large deliveries that come in on pallets.

Shipping and receiving also receives, divides by school and delivers all new text books received by NISD. They also pick up and

ship out all out-of-adoption text books. A somewhat unique task with which the departments works is test material. Coordinated by the district's administration, shipping and receiving receives and distributes the testing material for NISD.

Plant services department handles renovation and new construction throughout the district. Each summer, projects are divided into two groups - in-house and those contracted out. In-house projects are usually at the request of the principals and mostly include classroom renovations. Contracted projects are capital maintenance projects, that might include replacing and repairing roofs as well as heating and air conditioning units.

Over the past several summers, the district has contracted more than \$1 million worth of work. All of the work is engineered and bid, and these projects begin the last day of class and are completed during a typically tight summer time frame. These types of projects occasionally require closing a school, sometimes forcing relocation of summer school activities.

Plant services department has a director and one secretary that deal with all of the administration, payroll and payables in addition to required annual inspections. Each department has a working supervisor who also serves in the field across the district every day.

Ralph LaRue, is director of facilities and construction for Nacogdoches ISD.

OUR TURN

America has a gun problem

Change must happen soon

As the nation still tries to wrap its collective conscious around yet another mass shooting, it's time for all Americans to admit that our country has a gun problem.

The senseless and irrational slaughter of 26 people at First Baptist Church in tiny Sutherland Springs is another reminder. So were Las Vegas in October; Orlando in 2016, San Bernadino, California, in 2015, and Newton, Connecticut, and Aurora, Colorado, in 2012. The list of modern mass shootings is like a cancer this nation has chosen to ignore all the way back to when Charles Whitman perched himself atop the clock tower at the University of Texas, killing 17 people in 1966.

Whitman was not the first mass killer, but he's arguably the most well known. It was with him here in the Lone Star State that the modern legacy of violence began, and it's here we hope it shall end.

It has to end. A cancer untreated leads to death.

Admitting we have a problem is the first step in ridding ourselves of this plague.

Good guys with guns have long been heralded as the solution, but that does not seem to be working. Good people with guns stopped Whitman. They also stopped the shooter Sunday in Sutherland Springs. They've halted many other shootings but not until the carnage was out of control.

We understand that Americans need guns. Guns are vital tools for hunting and protection of self and property. Many areas of America, including Deep East Texas, are rural and isolated, and homeowners need to be able to defend themselves when armed authorities might be miles away. The same argument holds true in cities. Good guys with guns can't be everywhere.

Something must change.

When Tylenol was suspected in the deaths of seven people in Chicago in the early 1980s, production of the over-the-counter was stopped until the problem was solved. When 271 people were killed because of faulty Firestone tires about two decades ago, outraged ensued. Blue Bell recalled all its ice cream and shutdown production for months after listeria killed three consumers.

Do Americans value those lives more than the lives of those killed by firearms? No one shrugged and wondered why. The problems were taken on immediately. But since the mid 1960s, Americans have passed the buck on our gun problem.

Congress can, and should, take actions that do not hamper gun rights while reducing the opportunities for armed villains to kill. We see no need for a person who is not currently deployed to a combat zone to own automatic weapons or excessively large ammunition magazines. We also see no need for bump stocks, which allow semi-automatic weapons to fire like fully automatic ones.

These changes would force assailants to frequently reload or switch weapons while giving people more time to escape or take on the attacker. We do not see them as infringing on anyone's right to own or use a gun.

American gun control in the face of a major problem is not without precedent. In the 1830s, as Americans were willfully dueling each other to the death with pistols and rifles, states began to outlaw the practice. Guns and knives were taken out of the hands of men willing to do harm to each other. Hardly anyone cried foul, and today no one pines for pistols at 20 paces.

Americans must also change the way we think about guns. Many now view weapons as just another consumer good. They purchase firearms only because they can or because of fanciful ideas that the government is coming to take away their firepower.

"The only test most people have to pass to gain access to a weapon of exceptional lethal power is this: Do you have enough cash or credit?" Michael Brendan Dougherty, a conservative columnist for The Week magazine pointed out in a 2015 essay.

In the same essay, Dougherty points out that classical Republican theory restricts ownership of firearms not to those who can cough up enough cash but to those it deems responsible enough to hold public order.

Families, firearms instructors and organizations like the NRA do a good job of training a segment of society to be a responsible armed public. But is that responsible armed public enough? They certainly don't need fully automatic weapons. The results of that experiment so far are not encouraging.

YOUR TURN

Expressing thanks

Current board member and candidate for the at large board member position, November 2017 election

To all my friends and supporters, a heartfelt thanks.

I am writing this now, before the election results are in. I didn't want my comments or feelings to be influenced one way or the other by knowing the election results. I just want all of my friends and supporters to know how much I appreciate their efforts. Win, lose or draw I am humbled by all the support I have received. The newspaper ad campaign has been good. . . but it pales in comparison to the social media effort. I simply cannot believe how many of my Facebook friends and their friends have taken the time and effort to share my posts and support my candidacy. I even had Facebook friends with no ties that I know of to Nacogdoches share my posts. . . that is simply awesome.

Also here I want to make sure I answer the question that I have gotten more often than any other. "Why do I

even want the Nacogdoches Memorial Hospital board member job?" Several years ago, when I first ran for the board position it was because of friends and associates who thought with my background and current work experiences, I could bring something of value to the board and ultimately to the hospital and the community. At this point, I can only hope that was true. I feel like I have added a lot of value to the many decisions that we as a board have made over the past several years.

As for now, the reasons I want to continue are many:

- 1) I am not a quitter
- 2) Over the past year or so we have started many initiatives to right the ship and get it back on course. . . I don't want to see all that slow down.
- 3) Soon we will begin the process of finding a new and more permanent CEO. I was very much involved the last time, and I learned a lot that will be invaluable this time.
- 4) Over the last several years I have grown to know and respect many of the dedicated employees and volunteers at the hospital. I know

that people think hospital employees make lots of money. . . that's simply not true for the majority of workers there. And of course, the many volunteers simply give their time and effort to help their fellow man and the community. Just a few days ago at the Women's Health open house, Dr. Kim Schaus introduced Nancy Fredo, a longtime employee and current midwifery services director at Nacogdoches Memorial. In her 24 years of service at Memorial, she has delivered almost 3200 babies. . . simply incredible, and I am confident that she didn't do all that just for the money.

There are hundreds of employees and volunteers like Nancy at Memorial Hospital whose top priorities are quality patient care and quality outcomes. It's employees like Nancy, and the many others like her at Memorial, who make me want to continue helping Nacogdoches Memorial Hospital succeed in any way I possibly can.

Thanks again for all your support. It has been an honor and a privilege to serve on the Nacogdoches Memo-

rial Hospital board.

Jim Roberts, Nacogdoches

Apologies needed for area's veterans

How disconcerting it was to have the City of Nacogdoches schedule a foot race on Veteran's Day and refuse to change the route of that race so the Veteran's Day Parade could be held on Veteran's Day this year!

Whoever the city employee is that was responsible for that gross error needs to apologize to our honored veterans and to the city of Nacogdoches.

Texas provides more young men and women who serve in our military than any other state, and yet our city had a very poor showing of people, organizations, and civic-minded companies participating in the parade to honor our veterans who sacrifice to make our hard-fought freedoms possible.

Where were our elected officials? Oh, that's right, they don't need to be seen in a parade because this isn't an election year. Shame on you all! Where were the Chamber of Com-

merce members with cars or trucks dressed in red, white, and blue thanking our veterans? Where were the Democrats? Absent as well.

At least the Nacogdoches County Republican Women were represented, albeit a very small group of them, handing out flags as their tradition for the parade is.

Worse yet is Lufkin. They announced that their Veteran's Day Parade, which is scheduled to be held on Veteran's Day next Saturday, is being cancelled because not enough groups have signed up to make the parade worth the cost for the city to block off the streets and provide police officers to direct traffic. How embarrassing for them!

Maybe a few proud, patriotic-minded groups from Nacogdoches should register to be in the Lufkin Veteran's Day Parade to remind East Texans that they owe our veterans (at the very least) a vote of appreciation by participating in an annual parade in their honor for Veteran's Day.

Anita Kite, Nacogdoches
This letter was signed by at least 82 people from this area.