



WINTER 2000

Volume 6 • Number 1

Coalition Against Gun Violence is a non-profit coalition united against gun violence and committed to creating a safer community for Santa Barbara County residents.

COALITION AGAINST GUN VIOLENCE
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A project of the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation

JOIN US at a January Community Forum

The League of Women Voters and Coalition Against Gun Violence are jointly presenting a community forum, **“A World Full of Guns.”** The forum will take place at the Louise Lowry Davis Center, De La Vina at Victoria Streets, on January 18, 2000, from 12:15 until 2:00 p.m. Bring your lunch if you wish; beverages will be provided.

“A World Full of Guns” — the 20/20 program that generated the largest response of any 20/20 program ABC has ever aired will be shown. “A World Full of Guns” demonstrates that we must think in new and different ways about the vulnerability and safety of our children in a world full of guns. You will see and hear what children as young as 3-years old do when they see a gun. You will see and hear what teenagers know about the guns in their homes. Come and discuss how we can do better at keeping our most important asset, our children, safe in a world full of guns.

Guest speakers will be Dale Tetelman from the Coalition, who will present the video, Larry Bascom, Ph.D, past President of the County Psychological Association, and Children’s Issues consultant Diane Harmon. A discussion regarding children and guns, violence and safety will follow the video.

We are pleased that the Santa Barbara Chapter of the League has chosen to engage the community in a discussion about keeping children safe from guns and violence. The League’s national position on gun control adopted in 1990 says in brief: “Protect the health and safety of citizens through limiting the accessibility and regulating the ownership of handguns and semi-automatic assault weapons.”

Abundant parking is available behind the center. For information about this important event please call: (805) 564-6803.

REGISTRATION AND LICENSING OF GUNS (Part I) The Next Gun-Control Goal

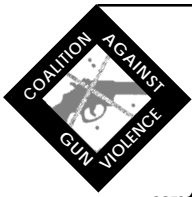
California has gone further than any other state to prevent gun tragedies. In January, 2000 four new laws will go into effect: a ban on assault guns and high-capacity magazines, a limit of one gun purchase per month, a requirement that all new guns be sold with trigger locks, and a ban on the sale and manufacture of junk guns. Why do we need to do more? According to the *Los Angeles Times* (9-5-99) there are an estimated 20 to 30 million guns in California, but no one knows precisely how many there really are or who has them — that’s part of the problem. We could enact the most comprehensive gun laws extant but still not stop firearms coming in from other states in trunks of cars or by mail. What else should California do?

Should we move toward licensing gun owners and registering their firearms? Eleven states have some form of licensing, and a handful of others require registration. Only Hawaii requires both. California State Assemblymembers Hannah-Beth Jackson and Jack Scott have announced that they will introduce a bill in January requiring a license to

continued on page two

At our 5th Annual Dinner
Santa Barbara Women Against Gun Violence
formally announced that our organization will
henceforth be known as:
**Coalition Against Gun Violence,
A Santa Barbara Coalition.**

We believe the name change more accurately
reflects the make-up of our membership
and our 33 partnership organizations.



Registration and Licensing of Guns

The Next Gun-Control Goal

continued from page one

purchase all handguns, as well their registration. The licensing portion of the bill will require the licensing of firearms the owner already possesses, as well as those they purchase in the future.

Further, Senator Don Perate (D-Alameda) and Assemblyman Mike Honda (D-San Jose) plan to present bills that would allow police to quickly trace any gun used in a crime and require gun buyers to demonstrate that they can safely store and handle their weapons. California currently requires gun buyers to pass a minimal test or sit through a four-hour video course on gun safety. Gun dealers administer the written test; no hands-on safety training is required, nor must buyers show they can safely load, unload, store or fire guns. This is as reckless as licensing drivers without ever putting them behind the wheel.

In a recent CNN/Time Magazine poll, an overwhelming 77 % of Americans favor requiring people to get a license before they can legally buy handguns. And 76% also favor requiring handgun owners to register each handgun they own. Gun supporters in Congress, including Dianne Feinstein (D-CA), are introducing historic legislation for a comprehensive national system of handgun licensing and registration. In a recent telephone conversation with Michael Beard, co-founder and President of the national organization, Coalition to Stop Gun Violence (CSGV), which just celebrated its 25th anniversary, he agreed that this issue will have considerable difficulty in Congress due to the powerful lobbying of the NRA, and that grassroots organizations, such as our own Coalition Against Gun Violence, must work locally and at the state level to achieve this essential legislation.

The following information was provided in part from CSGV's October 1999 Newsletter:

Why are handgun licensing and registration so important?

Under our current system, it is impossible to keep legally sold handguns out of the criminal and youth market. The only effective way to do that is by licensing handgun purchasers and registering handguns when they are sold or transferred.

Why is it important to require handgun purchasers to first obtain a handgun license?

Licensing would improve the effectiveness of background checks by giving law enforcement adequate time to complete the check, and would provide better identification of the handgun purchaser at the point of purchase.

Why is handgun registration and licensing so important to public safety?

Registration provides a mechanism for stopping the flow of handguns from the legal market (licensed dealers) to the criminal market. We need to register handguns when they are first sold so they can never be bought "legally" in "straw purchases" and immediately sold illegally into the youth or criminal markets. Registration prevents illegal transfers by making the registered owner responsible for what happens to his or her handgun, and makes owners periodically take responsibility for their guns by renewing their registrations.

Will licensing and registration make it more difficult for law-abiding citizens to obtain handguns?

No. Once a person obtains a license (which theoretically would require fingerprints, a photograph and a thorough background check) and demonstrates knowledge of the laws governing the use, possession, storage, and transfer of handguns and a basic understanding of firearm safety and minimal competence in handling firearms, purchasing a handgun will simply require a background check. While obtaining the initial license will require some paperwork and proof of appropriate training, it will be no harder than obtaining a drivers license. We license drivers and register cars, why not gun owners and handguns?

In practice, how would licensing and registration keep handguns out of the wrong hands?

Under a well-designed system, all handguns must be registered to a licensed purchaser when first sold (and used handguns must be transferred through a licensed dealer and registered in the same manner.) Regular renewal is required. If a handgun is sold, it must be immediately re-registered to the new owner. Registered handguns which fall into the wrong hands can immediately be traced back to the last registered owner, who will face serious criminal charges unless they are able to show they properly transferred the handgun in the first place.

(PART II to follow in the Spring newsletter)



The Gun Debate Takes Off!

(A Real-life Play in Three Acts)

For 30 years gun control advocates failed to accomplish all but modest regulation of the manufacturing and sale of firearms. Yet today the industry is enmeshed in broadening litigation that could force it to change its marketing and manufacturing practices. We are reporting the story as a real-life drama, with its dramatis personae the real people involved. (Based on a 10/21/99 Wall Street Journal analysis)

CAST OF CHARACTERS AND SYNOPSIS

Act I - The Victims, the Cities and the Courts

Barbara Hohlt, technical worker for New Yorkers Against Gun Violence.

Freddie Hamilton, whose son was lost to gun violence in 1993, convinces Hohlt that gun manufacturers should be held accountable for the prevalence of guns, and that the only place to do this is in the courts.

Elsa Barnes, a solo practicing New York attorney, takes on the case, filing a suit against the gun industry that became known as the Hamilton case.

George Soros, philanthropist/social visionary, provides a grant of \$300,000 in October, 1998 to make sure the case, now involving the families of seven New Yorker shooting victims, got to trial. Other sources also contribute funds.

U.S. District Judge Jack Weinstein hears the Hamilton case when attorney Barnes steers it into his courtroom, knowing his reputation for stretching legal principles to force manufacturers to compensate large groups of victims. As hoped, Weinstein opines: "There may come a point that the market is so flooded with handguns sold without adequate concern over the channels of distribution and possession that they become a generic hazard to the community as a whole because of the high probability that these weapons will fall into the hands of criminals or minors." In February, 1999, the Hamilton jury became the first ever to find gun companies liable for criminal shootings.

David Kairys, Temple University law professor and member of the Philadelphia mayoral commission on youth violence (coincidentally, Judge Weinstein's former student at Columbia University Law School), saw the Hamilton ruling and the tobacco suits against cities as models. He reasoned that a city could also sue gun manufacturers demanding reimbursement for the public costs of gun violence: emergency medical and police services.

Philadelphia Mayor Edward Rendall decides not to file the Kairys suit — choosing instead to attempt to negotiate with the gun companies — but Kairys's precedent results in 29 other municipalities suing gun manufacturers, using the same public nuisance strategy in their litigation.

James Jay Baker, NRA's chief lobbyist, takes a hard line against suing cities, and brings down **Richard Feldman**, head of the American Shooting Sports Council, who was encouraging gun manufacturers to compromise with cities. Baker says of pending litigation: "We'll win this, we don't have to compromise."

Act II - Meanwhile, Back in Congress

Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold, the teen-aged killers at Columbine High School, set-off nationwide furor, leading **Robert Walker**, President of Handgun Control to state: "We haven't seen a public reaction like this before. We perceived an historic opportunity" (for meaningful gun-control legislation).

NRA-allies in Congress block meaningful legislation, demonstrating how difficult it is to enact serious gun control at a national level. This underscores realization that if production and sale of firearms are to be significantly altered, it will occur by means of litigation and that the basic struggle of meaningful control must occur at the local level by grassroots organizations everywhere.

Act III - The Future of Litigation

Eliot Spitzer, New York's attorney general, a realist who sees the municipal litigation as chancy in legal terms, but as a way to force the industry to accept a new "code of conduct" in exchange for a truce. Soon after taking office in January, 1999 he orders his staff to prepare drafts for two actions: a suit that would make New York the first state to join the litigation, and an industry code of conduct that he would offer manufacturers as an alternative to a New York lawsuit. The code of conduct would include the following provisions: cease producing less-expensive handguns, develop a smart gun, and supervise retail sales for only one gun per buyer. It would also require the industry to subject itself to an outside "monitor" who would enforce the code.

An Ohio state judge issues the first ruling on the merits of one of the municipal suits, dismissing that city's legal action. He rejects the suit as an attempt to accomplish through the court system what is really the job of a legislature.

Other "actors" in this drama - the future will tell!



Gun Markets Feel the Heat from Lawsuits

Three Junk Gun Manufacturers Close Doors in California

Lorcin, manufacturer of junk guns (Saturday Night Specials) in Mira Loma California, ceased operation in mid-August (Wall St. Journal, 9-8-99), two weeks after James Waldorf resigned as president and board member. Lorcin is the second Southern California manufacturer of cheap, poorly made handguns to take dramatic action in the wake of municipal litigation against the gun industry. In May, 1999 Davis Industries, Inc., also in Mira Loma, filed for court protection from creditors under Chapter 11 of the U.S. Bankruptcy Code. However a judge refused to stay (stop) suits filed by San Francisco, Chicago and Wayne County, Michigan.

Mr. Waldorf has launched a new company near his home in Reno, Nevada that will manufacture more expensive firearms for the law-enforcement and private-security market. His new brand, expected to be known as "Standard Arms," could face hurdles because of Lorcin's poor reputation in the gun industry as a maker of cheap guns.

The Lorcin (L-25), one of the guns most frequently traced to violent crime, retailed for \$69, making it the least expensive firearm in the United States in 1997. Wholesalers could purchase it for \$28. The total cost of producing the gun — parts and labor — was \$10, according to financial documents contained in court filings in Riverside, California. The business required little investment, no fancy machinery or high-tech equipment and only a small group of workers. A tool and die shop cut parts out of the low-grade material, a soft zinc alloy for a couple of dollars. Different sub-contractors made the various internal parts often using minimum wage day laborers. The parts were quickly assembled by about 30 workers earning \$6.60 an hour into the popular but lethal consumer product — the Lorcin L-25 semiautomatic pistol. For many years, some 60 percent of every sale at Lorcin was profit, termed as "unnatural" by a C.L. King & Associates analyst.

In 1996 Lorcin filed for bankruptcy protection, not due to failing business, but because it had been inundated with lawsuits from people who alleged they had been injured by poor-quality guns. The company faced 35 lawsuits and \$32 million in claims at the time. In bankruptcy, Lorcin was able to settle its lawsuits for about \$1.2 million, pennies on the dollar. The bankruptcy lawyer who represented creditors said, "They're successful companies using bankruptcy as a shield to put a stop to the legitimate claims of individuals claims and cities."

Another manufacturer of junk guns named in multiple lawsuits, Arcadia Machine & Tool (AMT), in Irwindale, was struggling financially and was purchased in 1998 by two businessmen obsessed with an AMT product, the Automag. This .44 caliber semiautomatic pistol was made famous as "Dirty Harry's" weapon of choice. Due to California's strict new gun laws (requiring background checks on all employees and supplier employees), they decided to move to a more hospitable gun environment, Sturgis, South Dakota. They renamed the company, Galena, to protect themselves from AMT's debts and the lawsuits filed

against AMT by 13 California cities. So far no legal action has been taken, but in The Fortworth church rampage which left eight people dead, one of the guns used was made by AMT.

Of the six "Ring of Fire" manufacturers in California, that's three down and three to go.

Colt to Stop Selling Handguns

Colt Manufacturing Company is abandoning much of its 144-year-old retail gun business in an effort to limit its liability in lawsuits. Colt now plans to make fewer weapons and to sell them mainly to law enforcement agencies and the military. It will effectively stop selling handguns to civilians, except to gun collectors.

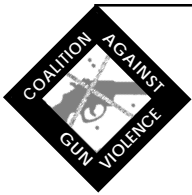
The company faces 28 lawsuits from cities, counties and others. To help further insulate the company from legal liability, current and former executives said it plans to create a separate company, which may be called "iColt", that would license the "smart gun" prototype developed in 1996. Colt officials say they have poured money into legal fees that otherwise would be going to research and development. New York financiers who control the manufacturer have used Colt as a vehicle to acquire other makers of small military arms.

One risk the restructuring creates is a negative reaction from activist gun owners, who could perceive a withdrawal from the consumer handgun market as another indication of Colt bending to gun-control proponents. Gun owners in New Jersey, California and other states mounted a boycott of Colt's products last year, partly in response to the company's development of the smart gun, which also was seen as a manifestation of weakness in response to gun foes. On the other hand, by spinning off "iColt" they may be able to distance themselves from the smart gun controversy. The smart gun prototype can fire only when the trigger is pulled by someone wearing a wristband that emits a coded radio signal that is received by a computer microchip in the gun's handle. Still controversial and unreliable, the smart gun is a product that would appeal to middle-class consumers.

Lawsuits Prompt Smith & Wesson Policy Changes

Smith & Wesson, the nation's largest handgun maker, is requiring dealers to sign a code of ethics designed to prevent the illegal sale of guns. More than 3/4 of their 3500 dealers have signed the agreement. Among other things, the code requires dealers to obey all firearm laws, sell only Smith & Wesson guns with safety locks, and closely monitor buyers to avoid illegal purchases. However, because the company doesn't sell directly to retailers, stores need not belong to the program to sell Smith & Wessons.

Gun control advocate Josh Sugarman, director of the Violence Policy Center, said the code is meant only to let the company "point fingers at the dealers" in suits.



5th Annual Dinner a Triumph Thanks to Assemblymember Jack Scott



Featured speaker, Assemblymember Jack Scott.

Assemblymember Jack Scott has an impressive background and credentials and we expected that he would be a fine speaker. However, for those of you who were unable to attend, you missed a marvelous speaker and an excellent speech. Our Assemblymember, Hannah-Beth Jackson, flew back a day early from a conference in Belgium to provide an inspiring introduction for her colleague. There was a fine crowd including many elected officials, all of whom enjoyed a wonderful dinner in a lovely setting at the Radisson Hotel.



Introductory remarks by Assemblymember Hannah-Beth Jackson.

Three bills formulated by Jack Scott have been signed into law. Grassroots organizations, like ours, are part of the reason why these bills passed, said Scott. Dr. Scott feels good about what he perceives as a national change in attitude about gun control. Even though Governor Davis stated he wanted a moratorium on gun control legislation, in recent weeks both Dr. Scott and Hannah-Beth Jackson have moved forward to draft legislation that would mandate licensing and registration for handguns in California.

At the dinner, responding to a question about the Second Amendment, Dr. Scott, holder of a Ph.D. in history, said that the Bill of Rights was written at a time of muskets, not the high-powered weapons of today. In our contemporary society the constitutional right to own a gun is a bogus argument that won't stand up in court. It has not prevented gun control laws from being



Master of Ceremonies and Co-chair of CAGV Toni Wellen (l), CAGV Coordinator Ilene Pritikin, and CAGV activist Sue Broidy.

passed and since *Miller v. U.S.* in 1939, no gun control law has been ruled unconstitutional on Second Amendment grounds.

Dr. Scott said that two things are fueling the increase in weaponry:

- 1) Gun manufacturers and profits,
- 2) Some individuals feel empowered if they have a gun.

Dr. Scott believes that gun regulation is not the total answer to the pervasive and complex issue of violence in the United States; however the surfeit of guns is creating daily havoc. The economic costs are staggering — \$20,000 per gun injury and the public bears one-half of this cost. “We are hearing across this land the political will of the people on the issue of guns and violence,” said Dr. Scott.

We'll be carefully watching the future progress of these two Assemblymembers' proposed legislation.



Feds File Suit Against the Gun Industry

In a move to force the firearms industry to adopt safer ways of doing business, the federal government said that it was preparing a lawsuit against gun makers on behalf of the three million people who live in public housing projects, where shootings have taken a heavy toll for years. As reported in the *New York Times* on Wednesday, December 8, 1999, the Clinton Administration has decided to throw its weight behind suits filed by 29 cities and counties against gun companies. Housing and Urban Development, which provides funding to more than 3,000 local housing authorities, would coordinate the action and might appear as a plaintiff on behalf of local authorities that are in receivership. HUD Secretary Andrew Cuomo said the federal goal is a settlement, not a drawn-out lawsuit. But the government feels they have a strong position and that this action will intensify the pressure being placed on the gun industry.

The Gun Lobby Counter-Attack

The following states have either passed or have pending legislation, termed "gun industry relief bills", that would prevent localities from commencing a lawsuit against a firearm or ammunition manufacturer: Alaska, Arizona, Arkansas, Louisiana, Maine, Michigan, Montana, Nevada, Oklahoma, Oregon, Tennessee, Texas, Wisconsin and Pennsylvania. The gun lobby attempts to chose states with governors they feel will sign these bills, once passed, into law.

The Cost of Gun Ownership Continues to Rise at Many Levels

Shipping companies are changing and tightening rules for shipping handguns and effectively raising prices for the service. The companies are seeking to protect themselves against potential liability and to reflect growing societal concerns about guns falling into criminal hands. So at a time when the gun industry is spending heavily against spreading litigation, it will now see its shipping bills double or triple. Ground transportation is about \$8 to \$10 per handgun and \$18 to \$20 for air service.

United Parcel Service will no longer accept handguns through its inexpensive ground delivery system, but only via its more costly overnight air service. Long guns, which are more difficult to steal, will not be affected.

RPS Inc., the ground-based package-delivery unit of FDX Corporation, has also confirmed they will no longer handle handguns. Similar to UPS, they will continue to handle long-barreled guns and ammunition.

Airborne Freight will also restrict and impose stringent new rules which will largely prohibit the shipment of handguns using their services. Federal Express has restricted guns to its Priority Overnight Service for the past 20 years.

As a result, gun makers, wholesalers, and dealers will be forced to use the most expensive options for shipping their wares — a cost they say will be passed on to consumers.

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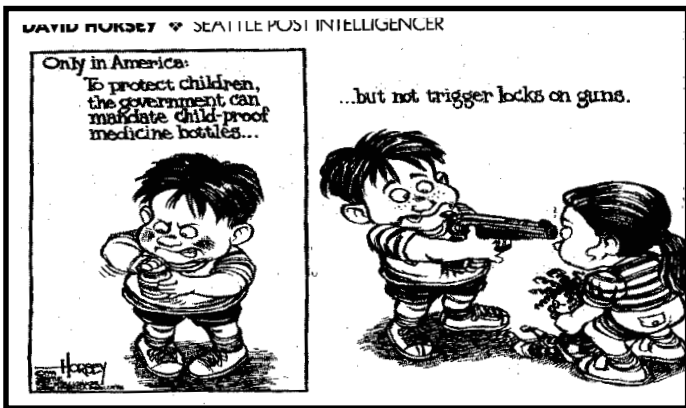
More School Shootings

Fort Gibson, Oklahoma — A 13-year old boy described as a “popular nice boy” opened fire on his middle school classmates using his father’s 9 mm semiautomatic handgun. He fired the gun at least 15 times before a teacher subdued him. Five students were wounded. It was stated that, “He didn’t say anything. It was like he was just in a daze.”

Veghel, Netherlands— a teenage student apparently bent on revenge opened fire inside a high school on Dec. 7, 1999 wounding a teacher and 4 students in the first school shooting in Dutch history. In this country known for its strict gun control laws, the 17-year old suspect fired more than 10 shots before surrendering to police. It was suspected that the student was upset over a romance involving his sister and another student. “When I heard about the news this afternoon, I thought this type of thing only happened in America,” said Michel van Leuken, 19 of Veghel. “I can’t believe it would happen here.”

Is Violence Really Declining in the US?

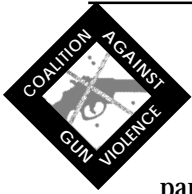
Rosy assessments of the nation’s declining crime rate wrongly focus on short-term drops from crime peaks early in the decade and ignore the overall rise of violence since the 1960s, according to a new report. The National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence found that violent crime reported to the FBI, in major cities, has risen by 40 percent since 1969. The new study (a 30-year update of the landmark study by the Commission), which was formally released last week by the Milton S. Eisenhower Foundation, is intended as a reminder that the U.S. still suffers from a historically high level of violence. Reports that crime and violence have declined are misleading as they are based on comparisons to unusually high levels of violence that prevailed in the late 1980s and early 1990s. “There is no attempt here to be doomsayers or naysayers and say nothing good has happened in the last few years. But the intent is to gain perspective by looking back,” says Elliot Currie, one of several authors of the original report who also participated in the update. The study’s strength, its authors say -- lies in the perspective of looking at crime statistics over decades, rather than years -- is necessary to understand public safety and avoid simplistic conclusions about declines in crime. The study cites programs and strategies that have proven to be good public policy in approaches to crime prevention.



Number of Gun Permits Up in Orange County

As he vowed in last year’s election, Orange County Sheriff Mike Carona has forged ahead with a promise to ease restrictions on concealed weapon permits, boosting the number by more than half over last year’s number of permits. 482 permits were signed off as of December 1999, compared to 308 the previous year. 877 persons applied for permits and 319 were denied. Mary Leigh Blek, Chairwoman of Orange County Citizens for the Prevention of Gun Violence, stated, “Every gun out there that is loaded and concealed is a threat to public safety.” Costa Mesa Police Chief David L. Snowden is concerned that there are more armed people than ever before, saying “The police officer doesn’t have a crystal ball. He doesn’t know whether the people armed in a car are good guys or bad guys.”





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Three clicks to our Index and click "Contact Us." Just type "Address" as the subject and then type your e-mail address. It's confidential, it takes just a moment, and it will help reduce waste and save money. Please do it today!

CAGV welcomes a new coalition member: Santa Barbara Friends Meeting (Quakers)

PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS • A GROWING COALITION

American Association of University Women, Goleta Valley • American Association of University Women, Santa Barbara
CALM (Child Abuse Listening Mediation) • Casa de la Raza • Community Mediation Program • Conflict Management Institute
Congregation B'nai B'rith Temple Sisterhood • Council on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse
Counseling Center for Children, Adolescents & Their Families • Democratic League • Democratic Women
The Family Service Agency • Green Party • Isla Vista Health Project • Jewish Community Relations Council
Junior League of Santa Barbara • League of Women Voters • NAACP, Santa Barbara Chapter • One Stop Immigration & Educational
Center • Peace Education Project Physicians for Social Responsibility • Hadassah, S.B. Chapter • Santa Barbara Area Council of PTAs
Santa Barbara Friends (Quakers) • Santa Barbara Jewish Community Relations Council • Santa Barbara Pro Youth Coalition
Santa Barbara Rape Crisis Center • Santa Barbara Women's Political Committee • Shelter Services for Women
United Methodist Women of the First United Methodist Church of Santa Barbara
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COALITION AGAINST GUN VIOLENCE
A Project of the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation

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This newsletter is published quarterly by Coalition Against Gun Violence, a non-profit coalition (a project of the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation) united against gun violence and committed to creating a safer community for Santa Barbara County residents. All members volunteer their time and all funds come from grants or donations from interested and dedicated individuals. Please address all correspondence to CAGV Newsletter, 1187 Coast Village Rd, to the address below. **Contributing writers:** Toni Wellen and Ilene Pritikin • **Editor:** Toni Wellen • **Desktop Publisher:** Laura Lynch

Photographs: Laura Lynch



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