

Active shooter training prepares teachers for worst



By
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The Jonathan Alder School District gathered its 130 teachers at an empty Plain City Elementary School on Friday to train them in the event of an active shooter on campus. The district collaborated with local first responders from the Plain City Police Department, Madison and Logan County Sher-

iff's Offices and the Pleasant Valley Fire Department.

Gary Chapman, Jonathan Alder's superintendent, said the school district completed similar training in January after the shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary.

"We did that (training) for all of our staff at their respective buildings," Chapman said. "What we wanted to do is follow-up to that training and go a little bit further, especially based upon new research, best practices, what's current and

what's out there."

The first responders participated in the training in January, attending all of the sessions in each school building. Chapman says that relationships with first responders are "critical."

"What it does is help to educate and inform them and it also builds relationships with those first responders because that is critical to the safety of the students," he said. "When you can partnership with those first responders, different groups, that is a tremendous

opportunity for our community and our school community. It's all of us working together to keep kids safe and that's our number one priority."

Gary Sigrist, a former educator and police officer, is the CEO and president of Safeguard Risk Solutions. Safeguard offers safety training for a variety of organizations, including schools, churches and office buildings.

Sigrist did a presentation that built on what the teachers learned in January. He spoke about threat assessment and the steps teachers can take to determine whether a student is a threat to others' safety. The teachers also learned methods they can use to protect themselves and students in case of an active shooter.

He used specific examples from other school shootings, like Virginia Tech, to illustrate which methods work and which ones don't. He said that active shooters model their behavior in response to the way law enforcement handles these situations.

"There is a constantly evolving response based what the bad people are doing," he said. "Unfortunately, we're always behind."

Despite this, Sigrist says the course is effective in preventing active shooters.

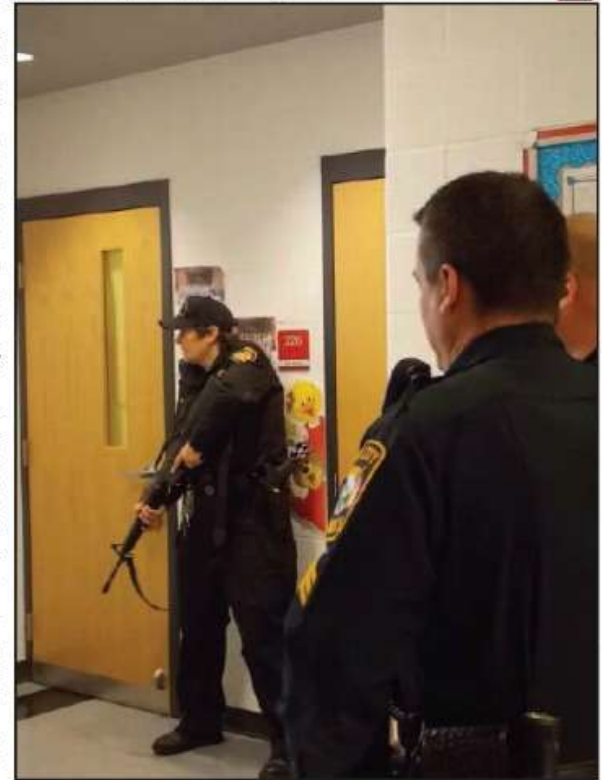
"We do stop a lot of active shooters from occurring because of threat assessment,"

he said.

After the presentation, teachers broke into two groups and were required to do two exercises. The first exercise required teachers to apply the safety methods they learned in the

presentation. A man walked through the hallway yelling threats while the teachers barricaded themselves in their rooms. The police officers fired

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Deputy Kelly Sparks, of the Madison County Sheriff's Office, prepares to enter a classroom after the practice lockdown has been called off.

(Journal-Tribune photo by Taylor Evans)



Gary Sigrist of Safeguard Risk Solutions does a presentation about the threat assessment process to a room of 130 teachers from the Jonathan Alder School District on Friday.

(Journal-Tribune photo by Taylor Evans)

SHOOTER-----

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off blank rounds to make the simulation as real as possible.

The teachers also learned how to complete a threat assessment. Using worksheets with different what-if scenarios, the teachers evaluated their options and actions they should take in each case.

Chapman said that these scenarios are as realistic as they can be and prepare teachers.

"What we cannot do anymore is say 'well, it'll never happen here.' That's no longer an option," he said. "What we have to do is ensure that we've done everything we can to prepare, plan and train if the unfortunate event actually occurred."



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