



**Getting involved with reducing Gun Violence
by Brendan Coffey, TGS supporter**

My own awareness that shootings and gun deaths were part of the fabric of American life began as a teen reading newspapers in the 1970's. One had to accept it seemed, the finite possibility that one day you or someone you knew could fall victim to a bullet. It wasn't necessarily a concern of the highest probability, but nor was it as rare as being struck by lightning. Sometimes the news stories hit closer to home, someone especially notable or popular or defenseless might evoke a greater sense of loss, but mostly such news left a vague feeling of a remote, regrettable, statistical passing.

As a parent, in the 1990's my acclimatization began to be challenged by an apparent ramping in the scale of arbitrary gun violence. As our changing culture embraced more deadly weapons, place names such as Columbine became markers for small massacres. Our society made some adjustments (e.g. metal detectors and awareness counseling in high schools), absorbed these horrors, and we all moved on.

Then on December 14, 2012 came the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting in Newtown. I honestly have not been able to just move on from that overwhelmingly sad occurrence and don't even want to. We can only imagine the anguish of the Sandy Hook parents over what happened and how it might have been prevented. But many Americans were deeply affected and galvanized to push back against gun violence.

Nicole Hockley, Mark Barden and other parents from the school made reducing gun violence their life mission, founding the Sandy Hook Promise organization. SHP is making a difference, focusing on awareness, education, mental health intervention, gun safety practices, and policy advocacy. I am glad to contribute to SHP and sign onto their petitions but also wanted to engage more actively and locally.

Texas Gun Sense was one of the organizers of a beautiful, moving candlelight vigil in remembrance of Sandy Hook that I attended last December. Since becoming involved with TGS, I have met several individuals whose own lives have been directly impacted by gun violence. While mass shootings get the most attention, the cumulative suffering of the everyday onslaught of gun violence is much, much greater. And just as preventable.

TGS brings people in Texas together around the important issue of gun safety. I believe that the organization's common-sense, evidence-based approach to reducing gun violence is the best way to find common ground toward workable solutions. I am grateful for the opportunity to support their efforts in this cause.