



# Protecting Mine and Yours

**In February 2012, a student walked into a high school** just north of my hometown and began shooting in the cafeteria. Three precious young lives were lost that day. Another student was paralyzed for life. Countless additional lives were changed.

In those harrowing moments, some students fled to a nearby room to hide. They pushed a piano in front of the door to block the entrance and waited. Teachers down the hallway initiated the lockdown procedures they had practiced not too long ago.

Some doors locked. Some did not. Students in the hallway took shelter in the first available rooms. Some needed to be pulled into a classroom to be out of harm's way. Were it not for the actions of a selfless coach chasing after the gunman, we are not sure how much more devastation could have occurred. All of the destruction happened in less than a minute.

After serving on the school board of my daughters' Catholic school, I was now working for the school on the executive leadership team. I also represented the school on a consortium of local schools and safety forces. In the wake of that shooting, we discussed the training that many of us had recently experienced for a

hostile intruder lockdown situation.

We discussed the ideal of evacuating, avoiding, getting out, and getting away from a threat. Many of our classrooms had inoperable windows by design to control temperature and minimize the threat of the building being accessed through those openings. Most of our traditional buildings had second and third stories. Getting out quickly was a serious concern. Everyone agreed.

The conversation shifted to sheltering in place, hiding out, locking down, and barricading. A neighboring school had begun to use large pieces of rebar to jam into place to stop a door from opening. That is when fire officials and the police conflicted in views. That was also when my parental instincts worried about abuse, misuse, bullying, assault, and harassment.

Could such a response make a classroom a more dangerous place year around? Could the attempt to solve the rare, but high impact, possibility of an active shooter create a handful of unintended consequences that would diminish the safety of those we were trying to protect? The discussion created confusion and concern. That part of the plan was left unresolved.

The group met another few times that year. We discussed visitor management systems, security cameras, buzzer systems, panic buttons, shatterproof glass, and more. I created volumes of notes and remained focused on our teachers, our classrooms, and our children. What were they going to do if faced with an attacker intent on doing harm?

Nine and one half months later, Sandy Hook Elementary School.

Theory and debate stopped for me on December 14, 2012. I pulled in my good friend. I shared the fire code, building code, and daily school concerns about bullying, harassment, assault, custodial disputes, and domestic and workplace violence pieces that all had to be considered.

And we started. We set out to create a safer solution of superior strength that could be handled easily as an immediate civilian response before the good guys arrived. We traveled to meet code experts, architects, and engineering firms. We sought out more input from teachers and administrators. With dozens of contributing concerns, desires, and suggestions, we developed the Bearcade Door Control System.

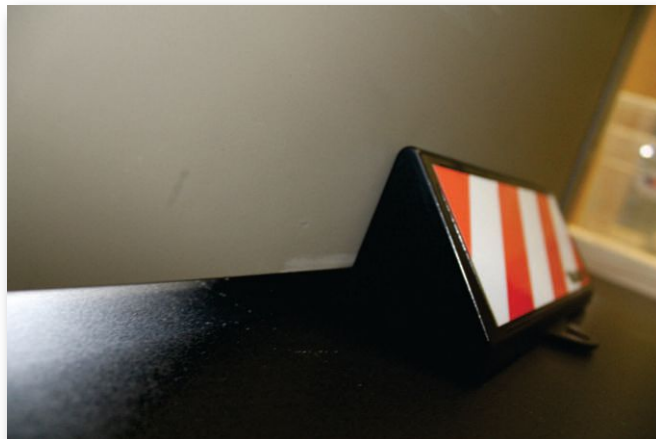
The compelling design features include being analogous to a fire extinguisher, EpiPen, or AED. Ready for use should you need it. Hope that you do not need it. Something that can be used before the professional safety forces arrive. Does not alter normal operations, compromise fire safety, or create undue fear. An effective, cost-conscious safety option.

Why the odd spelling and play on words? My youngest daughter kept hearing the term "barricade." Barricade. Barricade. She

went into the other room and drew out a bear cub. It was a bit like a young Smokey the Bear. It was cute but implied strength. The concept of a protective mother bear and her cubs emerged. We kept it and turned it into our first product name and logo.

Never having to address such a horror would be my dream. Not having something to protect my cubs and yours was not an option. **CSP**

**Bill Cushwa is a founder of National School Control Systems in Hudson, Ohio. With fellow parishioner and Catholic school parent, Dave Soulsby, the two developed Bearcade, [www.doorbearcade.com](http://www.doorbearcade.com).**



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