

Recent events hinder school safety

ARE YOU SAFE AT SCHOOL

By Molly Archer
editor-in-chief

Over 135 thousand students have lived through school shootings since Columbine according to the Trace organization. As this number continues to rise, schools try to find ways to keep their students safe.

“After an event like [the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School shooting], you kind of start to question everything,” senior Abbey Bird from Wando High School said. “You start to question your safety. You start to question the people around you. It really just makes you look at your school in [a] perspective that you didn’t want to in the first place. Now that the events in Florida have happened, I don’t feel safe at school. I don’t think that anyone feels safe at school right now.”

The Everytown for Gun Safety organization defines a school shooting as “any time a firearm discharges a live round inside a school building or on a school campus or grounds.” According to the organization, 21 schools in the United States have experienced a shooting that fits this definition.

“Our school—two nights ago—called our houses and let us know that they would now be doing random searches of students. Our admin. will be conducting searches throughout the week,” Byrd said. “But, that does make you feel a little safer when you know that people are doing something to at least ease tensions.”

Currently, 10 states allow school faculty to carry guns on campus according to Gifford’s Law Center. Not all teachers agree with these laws; some believe that allowing faculty to carry a weapon is not a feasible solution.

“I think [arming teachers] is an absurd suggestion that has been put out by people who have never taught in a classroom and don’t understand the risks and dangers that would come with that,” Phillip Caston, a teacher at Wando High School, said.

Caston also believes that those making the decision to arm teachers are not taking actual opinions of teachers into account.

“This is a narrative that is being pushed by people who pretty much have no experience in public schools, and nobody seems to want to listen to those of us who are,” Caston said. “I’m saying that as someone who is not frightened of guns at all and who can use them very well, and I do not want a gun in the classroom.”

Another teacher from Wando, Tammy Watkins, feels that it is not the responsibility of a teacher to possess a weapon at school.

“I don’t want to have a gun, and I don’t want any of my fellow teachers to have guns. I feel that we, as teachers, are there to nurture our children, to encourage them, to help them learn and not to be shooting people,” Watkins said. “I just think there are too many problems that could exist if teachers were allowed to

[have a weapon].”

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention states that the percentage of students who carried a gun decreased from 8 percent to five percent from 1993 to 1999 but hasn’t changed significantly from 1999 to 2007 because of Federal and state laws ensuring that schools are gun-free zones.

“Teachers now [are being asked] to pull out a gun and start firing with a bunch of students around [in the event of a lock down]. They could accidentally hit people, and then in that sense you’re going to train me to draw on possibly one of my current students and kill them,” Caston said. “That’s just a lot to ask for us in the profession. That’s not what I signed up for. I didn’t sign up to be a part of a militia.”

While some students, like Byrd are concerned with school safety after the current school shootings, not all are.

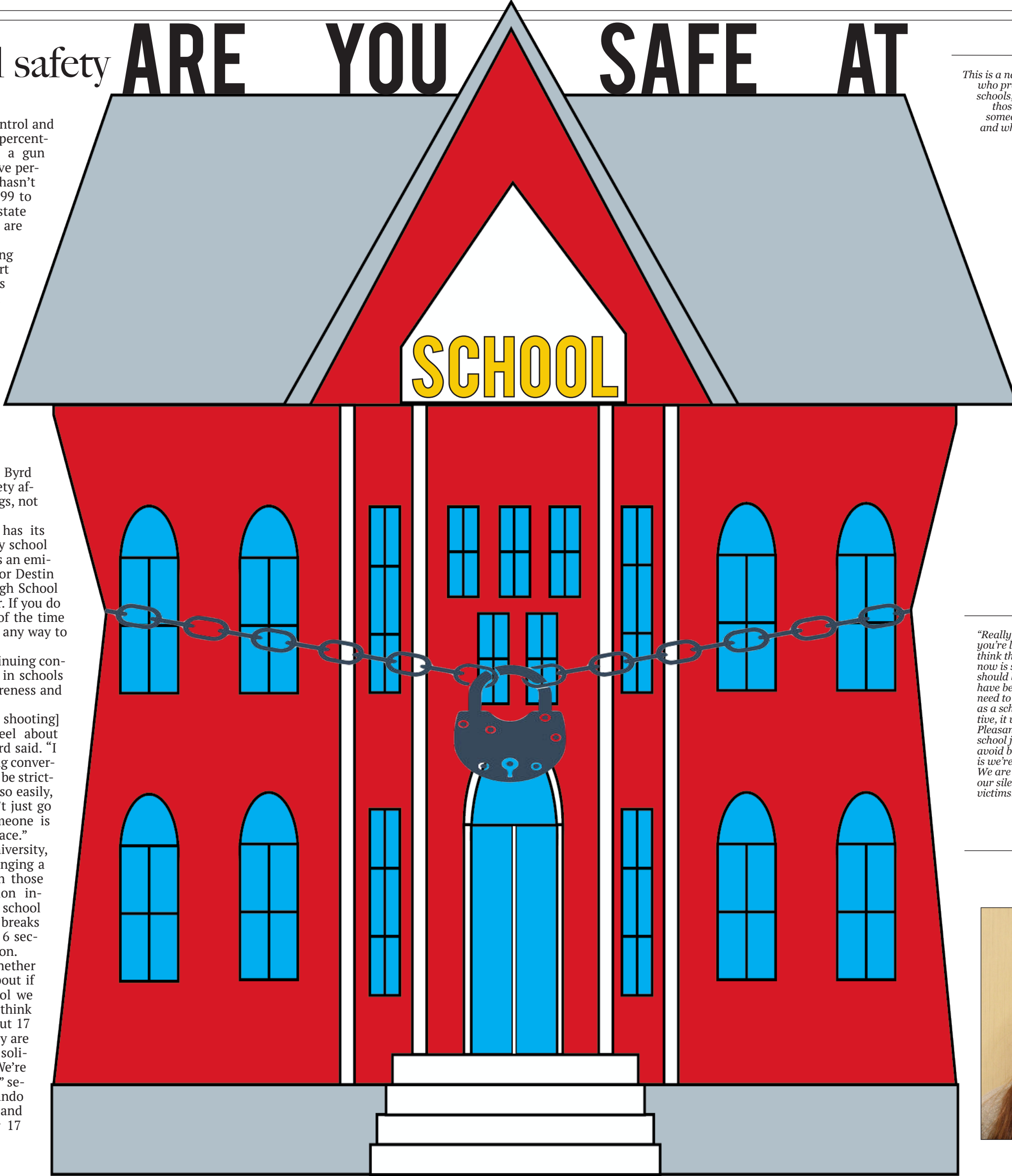
“Every high school, yes, has its problems, and I feel safe at my school because I don’t feel like there’s an eminent threat or anything,” senior Destin Howard from Cedar Shoals High School said. “But you can’t live in fear. If you do that, you’d just be scared all of the time anyway so I don’t think that’s any way to live.”

Howard believes that continuing conversation pertaining to safety in schools is important in spreading awareness and preventing dangerous events.

“[The Florida school shooting] doesn’t change the way I feel about school. I still feel safe,” Howard said. “I do think we need to keep having conversations because there needs to be stricter ways anyone can get a gun so easily, but at the same time you can’t just go around being afraid that someone is going to put a gun up to your face.”

According to Syracuse University, 1 in 8 students is reported bringing a weapon to school. Along with those students, around three million index crimes happen on or near school grounds every year, which breaks down to 1 crime occurs every 6 seconds when schools are in session.

“It’s not really about whether you’re left or right. It’s not about if you think that the gun control we have now is sufficient or if you think there should be more. It’s about 17 students have been killed. They are dead, and we need to stand in solidarity with them as a school. We’re holding hands in our hallways,” senior Lauren Insinger from Wando said. “We are linking arms and we’re holding our silence for 17 minutes for those victims.”



This is a narrative that is being pushed by people who pretty much have no experience in public schools, and nobody seems to want to listen to those of us who are, and I’m saying that as someone who is not frightened of guns at all and who can use them very well, and I do not want a gun in the classroom.”

Phillip Caston
Teacher at Wando High School



“[The Florida school shooting] doesn’t change the way I feel about school. I still feel safe in school. I do think we need to keep having conversations because there need to be stricter ways to where not anyone can get a gun so easily, but at the same time, you can’t just go around being afraid that someone is going to put a gun up to your face. If that’s the case, then you might as well be afraid to even go outside because a lot of people will have guns and firearms. I just don’t think a lot of people are aware of that.”

Destin Howard
Senior at Cedar Shoals High School

“Really, it’s not really about whether you’re left or right, it’s not about if you think that the gun control that we have now is sufficient or if you think there should be more. It’s about 17 students have been killed, they are dead, and we need to stand in solidarity with them as a school because, from our perspective, it was described to us as the Mount Pleasant of Florida. They were a big school just like [Wando]. So how we avoid being set as an example like that, is we’re holding hands in our hallways. We are linking arms and we’re holding our silence for 17 minutes for those victims.”

Lauren Insinger
Senior at Wando High School



“I really do feel safe at school, but after an event like this, you kinda start to question everything. You start to question your safety. You start to question the people around you. It really just makes you look at your school in [a] perspective that you didn’t want to in the first place. Now that the events in Florida have happened, honestly, I don’t feel safe at school. I don’t think that anyone feels safe at school right now.”

Abbey Byrd
Senior at Wando High School