

# The Wildcat Chronicles

Durant High School August 25, 2022

## Armed teachers next step for school safety?

By Kennedy Schumacher

After the death of 21 students and teachers in the Uvalde, Texas, shooting May 24, states are looking for ways to keep their schools safe.

The governor of Ohio, Mike DeWine, did not hesitate. In June, new legislation allows school employees to be armed as a next step to keep Ohio's schools safe.

Local reaction to the new law was mixed.

"I am really not in favor of educators being armed," said Durant School Resource Officer Mike Meier. "They are here to educate, not police. It is a lot of responsibility for an educator to go armed and possibly have to use the weapon that they have."

After the Uvalde shooting, Sgt. Meier doesn't believe this is a necessary next step to keeping schools safe.

"I don't believe this is our next step after Uvalde," he said. "Our first step is making sure that we have the necessary security steps in place to help prevent this from happening here."

Durant Superintendent Joe Burnett, on the other hand, is open to the idea, but agrees, "It's kind of a slippery slope."

"I think everyone is looking for solutions to make our schools safer," said

Mr. Burnett. "I would certainly want to define parameters of who could and couldn't carry on our [school] grounds."

Sgt. Meier said he doesn't believe arming educators is necessary in the Durant school because Durant "already has a school resource officer."

"I am trained to go directly to the threat, whereas teachers are trained to take care of the students first and foremost," he said.

Mr. Burnett feels responsible for going after an active shooter in the school. However, at the moment, he would have nothing to use to effectively stop an active shooter.

"I accept the fact that I'm going to put my life on the line to keep our kids safe," he said. However, he would like to be able to have something more than a stapler to use to go after an active shooter.

"If there's an active shooter in the school, I'm going to go towards the active shooter and do what I can to try to contain and stop them because it would be hard to live with myself knowing I didn't do all I could," he said.

The law in Ohio requires a maximum of 24 hours of training before an employee can go armed. Schools also have the

option to provide additional training if they wish.

Sgt. Meier felt that more training would be necessary.

"I cannot put a limit or a standard to how many hours of training a teacher would need to have before being armed in school," he said. "I look at Ohio that went from 700 hours of training to 24 hours of training. That, for sure, is not enough."

Sgt. Meier feels that if similar legislation was passed in Iowa, teachers should have the same amount of training as police officers.

"But that is a lot to ask of an educator," he said.

Sgt. Meier continued to say if Iowa would pass legislation to allow teachers to carry at school, he does not believe teachers would support it.

"If you look at Ohio's House Bill 99 passed, teachers' unions and education groups condemned the bill," he said. "This would have to pass by individual school boards as well."

Mr. Burnett admits he's not sure how teachers would react to such legislation. He said there would need to certainly be training and specific parameters put in place to make sure students are being kept safe,



not only from outside sources but also inside sources.

If there were weapons inside the school and the wrong people got their hands on the weapons, that wouldn't be good either, he said.

The majority of teachers aren't highly trained in weapons, so for them to be put into a situation with an active shooter would be very stressful and put a lot of pressure on teachers to perform in a difficult situation, he said.

"However, we do want our kids to be safe, and if it can keep our school safer,

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## As school opens, heat poses learning concerns

By Kiyah Daily

With the new school year comes the brutal August heat.

One study from Harvard University in 2018 suggests that there is a decrease in academic performance during excessive heat.

"Without air conditioning, each 1°F increase in school year temperature reduces the amount learned that year by one percent," reported a faculty study from Harvard's John F. Kennedy School of Government. "Our estimates imply that the benefits of school air conditioning likely outweigh the costs in

most of the US, particularly given future predicted climate change."

However, according to Durant Superintendent Joe Burnett, air conditioning for the entire school building would cost about \$7 million. Due to the high price tag, air conditioning has not been included in any future building renovations.

Mr. Burnett feels that even though air conditioning would be nice, it is not completely ideal for Durant because it would only be used for a couple weeks.

"Let's be honest, it's [heat] only for a couple weeks in the fall to maybe a week in

the spring," said Mr. Burnett. "It's not as bad in the spring. Usually August is our worst time."

Last spring, the district did have to shorten classes in May, including the day of the district track meet on May 12 where temperatures hit 94 degrees.

Interestingly enough, girls' track coach Doug Frett felt that his runners had an advantage that day over runners from schools with air conditioning.

"Getting accustomed to the heat could help make it easier to compete in the heat that day," said Coach Frett. "I feel that if

your body gets accustomed to the air conditioning, it could make it harder to compete."

When considering calling an early out for the school, Mr. Burnett looks at the heat index. He also considers if there are heat watches or warnings out.

Mr. Burnett believes that sometimes the day after excessive heat is worse than the day of since the brick exterior of the school building prevents the rooms from cooling off.

"I think it's harder to focus when they're [students] uncomfortable," said Mr. Burnett.

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## Former Durant football standout follows Nolan DeLong's last year

By Carlie Jo Fusco

Former Durant football star Jake Soy helped the Wildcats to make their first state playoff appearance ever in 2006. In 2009, Soy made the game-winning catch in the last 10 minutes of the DII national title game for the Northwest Missouri State Bearcats.

Fifteen years after graduating from Durant, Soy now follows senior Nolan De-

Long who is being recruited by major football programs after breaking the school record for career rushing yards with 4,195.

"I've been following Nolan from afar," said Soy. "I know his career has really been great so far, and I'm really excited to see him play his senior year."

While Soy had a passion to pursue a career in the NFL after college, an ankle injury cut his athletic career short.

"Being an athlete is never forever," Soy said.

He met his wife in college, and they now have two girls and one on the way. He and his family live in Maryland, and he works as a regional manager for a medical technologies corporation called Stryker.

"I knew Nolan when he was a young kid," said Soy. "Nolan's a great kid."

What advice does Soy have for DeLong as he goes into his senior season?

"In terms of advice, just enjoy it; it's going to go by fast," said Soy.

"There's something special about playing high school football with the kids you grew up with. Live in the moment, enjoy it. If he's put in the work, the result will definitely come. Stay committed to being a great team player and continue to buy into the system."

While in high school, Soy played the running back position for Durant. However, at Northwest Missouri State University, he switched over to wide receiver.

Soy stated that when he prepared to play college ball, he was surprised by the jump in athletic level because he was playing grown men at that point.

"For anybody who's making that jump to college, that jump is always going to be there," said Soy.

"When you make that jump, everyone is a little bit bigger and faster. Staying in the weight room and working on agility are ways to level it out."

When Soy played for the Bearcats, he wasn't a star right away, but he gained that status by continuing to buy into the system and working hard in practice to earn a playing spot.

"Quickly, I learned that in college as a wide receiver, you don't get the ball thrown to you that many times, and when you do, you have to make the most of every opportunity that you have," Soy said.

In the most important game of his career playing for the DII national title in 2009, Soy remembers the Bearcats taking an early lead against Grand Valley State.

He thought it was going to be a

blowout game as the Bearcats held a 21-0 lead by halftime. In the fourth quarter, Grand Valley State rallied and cut the lead to 23-20.

"We had lost all momentum," he recalled.

On fourth down with four yards to go, Soy caught a 26-yard touchdown pass to polish off the game, and the Bearcats won 30-23.

Soy said he was "fortunate enough" to make that catch.

However, it wasn't just the game-winning catch that Soy finds memorable; it was the impact he made on his teammates.

"To have a positive impact on the team, that was special," Soy said.

Soy was inducted into the Bearcats Hall of Fame in 2019.

When Soy was making the transition from Durant to Northwest Missouri State, he felt he had to work extra hard to play at the college level.

"I honestly just have such a passion to be great," Soy said.

"Getting there and wanting to make an impact and realizing I was a little behind, and I had come from a smaller school, so I saw what needed to be done."

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Photo contributed by Northwest Missouri State Athletics

Former Wildcat Jake Soy starred as wide receiver for Northwest Missouri State.