

Awareness is our best defense against pedophiles like Jerry Sandusky

Saturday, July 21, 2012 - A Heart Without Compromise; Advocating for Children by Jerome Elam

washingtontimes.com



Photo: n/a

Jerome Elam



[Ask me a question.](#)



• [Google Plus](#)

Related Columns

- [Jerry Sandusky: A child's innocence on trial](#)
- [Jerry Sandusky guilty: Justice for victims and an end to silence](#)
- [Guarding the monster's lair: Jerry Sandusky](#)

DALLAS, June 21, 2012 – Imagine for a moment that through some cruel twist of fate Jerry Sandusky is freed from prison by an unforeseen legal technicality. Then imagine that he shows up living in the house next door to you. I have no doubt that after the initial shock subsided swift and decisive action would follow. The community would rally and protests would ensue and his every action would be scrutinized.

Meetings would be held during which every law regarding pedophiles and every bit of information regarding the signs of child sex abuse would be discussed. Experts would be brought in to educate the community, and the determination of every citizen would be unshakeable until the most notorious threat to children's innocence was back in prison or relocated where he could not harm another child.

For the sake of argument, let's add another twist to our story. What if Jerry Sandusky lived next door to you and victim number one had never come forward? There would be no knowledge of any of the forty-five counts of child abuse that a jury of his peers convicted him of. He would appear to be this well-known and respected figure that for all appearances is someone you would invite over for a Sunday barbecue.

Sandusky would take an immediate interest in your children and buy them gifts and soon he would be known as "Uncle Jerry." It would be too late to stop the catastrophe that his now well-known victims suffered.

As a survivor of child sex abuse I will tell you that the story of Jerry Sandusky's victims has played out many times all over the world and continues to play out as you read this article.

According to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, there are currently 500,000-registered sex offenders in the United States and typically 100,000 of those are unaccounted for. These are just the ones that we know about, and as the events at Penn State have unfolded, we have seen how these individuals can find sanctuary in a place where a child's innocence is stripped of its value.

Jerry Sandusky is but one head of the Hydra, a multi-headed snake-like creature in Greek mythology who,

when one head was cut off, grew two back in its place. The problem of pedophilia is real, and the danger we face now is the slow lapse back into complacency as Sandusky rots in a jail cell for the rest of his life.

The Hydra was defeated by Heracles but only with the help of his nephew Iolaus. As each head was severed the pair worked together using a torch to cauterize the neck preventing the emergence of additional hideous heads.

The lesson we need to learn from this ancient Greek myth is that we can defeat those who threaten the most valuable treasure we have as they attempt to slither into their lives. To accomplish this we have to work together as a society to stop the next pedophile at the shower room door. We have the tools right in front of us to end child abuse in our lifetime and the first and most important of those is education.

The thought of our children incapacitated and their lives slipping away drives us to learn these lifesaving techniques. The memory of my childhood innocence is a whisper beneath the screams of my five-year-old self as the memories of my vandalized childhood echo in the recesses of my mind. I will never know the joy of being a carefree child lying in a field watching clouds as I imagine figures in their gentle shapes.

What I can do is fight until my dying breath so that every child can experience this and stop the tragedy of another vandalized childhood

According to Ryan C. W. Hall, MD in the publication, "A Profile of Pedophilia," 40% of pedophiles had already molested a child by the time they were fifteen years old. The study goes on to state, "Generally, pedophiles do not use force to have children engage in these activities but instead rely on various forms of psychic manipulation and desensitization (e.g., progression from innocuous touching to inappropriate touching, showing pornography to children)."

They also echo a fact made clear with the conviction of Jerry Sandusky. Pedophiles rarely if ever admit their guilt under any circumstances including a conviction for child molestation.

According to the study: "When confronted about engaging in such activities, pedophiles commonly justify and minimize their actions by stating that the acts "had educational value," that the child derived pleasure from the acts or attention, or that the child was provocative and encouraged the acts in some way."

Welcome to the mind of Jerry Sandusky where his acts are justified by a twisted sense of reality that all pedophiles share. The study also found, "It is unknown how many individuals have pedophilic fantasies and never act on them or who do act but are never caught."

An estimated 1 in 20 cases of child sexual abuse is reported or identified. Two Canadian studies, which randomly sampled 750 women and 750 men between the ages of 18 and 27 years, found that 32% of the women and 15.6% of the men had experienced "unwanted sexual contact" before the age of 17 years. These numbers are similar to studies in the United States that report 17% to 31% of females and 7% to 16% of males experienced unwanted sexual contact before the age of 18 years. In the Canadian studies, of those reporting unwanted sexual encounters, 21% of the females and 44% of the males experienced repetitive assaults.

During the Second World War the United States was reluctant to become involved in a conflict that would cost many American lives, but one event changed all that. Pearl Harbor awakened a "sleeping giant" as history portrays it, and put the might of America's factories and the resolve of every citizen behind the

defeat of the “axis of evil.”

We now face a new evil, and the trial of Jerry Sandusky is the Pearl Harbor in that war against child abuse. It is our call to action, both survivors and the rest of society to establish a united front against the vandalizing of our children’s innocence. We have to empower and educate parents and establish programs in our schools, public and private, along with our churches, youth leagues and summer camps to educate adults and children about the signs of child abuse.

Erin Merryn is a passionate and dedicated advocate for change, and a survivor of child abuse. She has worked tirelessly to promote passage of the legislation to ensure that we educate and empower parents, teachers and children through the passage of Erin’s law. Illinois, Indiana, Missouri, New York and recently Michigan have all passed Erin’s law, and we need to support passage in the remaining states. Information about Erin’s law can be found at <http://www.erinmerryn.net/erins-law.html>. It is through efforts such as Erin’s that we can truly defeat the assault on our children’s innocence.

We also need to enlist the aid of those individuals whom children idolize in the sports and entertainment industries to make public service announcements about recognizing and reporting child abuse. We need to explore every avenue to arm children with the ability to trigger a chain of reporting that effectively deals with any inappropriate sexual behavior before the curtain of silence falls.

The law has to adapt to the circumstances of child abuse and the statute of limitations has to be extended. It sometimes takes decades for a victim of child abuse to be able to overcome the grip of their pain and be able to disclose what happened to them. Studies have shown that a child who is a victim of child abuse must tell an average of nine adults before they are even believed. Many just give up and suffer in silence for many years with some never finding the strength to tell.

We have learned from Penn State the harsh reality of how those who witness or have knowledge of ongoing child abuse react. The appalling conduct of Penn State officials who knew of Jerry Sandusky’s molestation of young boys and chose to cover it up has shown us that people must be made responsible for their actions with regards to crimes against children.

In New York, recent legislation proposed by Democratic Assemblyman Michael Cusick and state Sen. Andrew Lanza would broaden the mandatory reporting law. Current legislation requires psychologists, physicians, day care providers, registered nurses, substance and alcohol abuse counselors, and social workers to report child abuse or be subject to civil and criminal liability. If they report an incidence of child abuse and an investigation finds no proof, the mandated reporter is given immunity under the law from any lawsuit that ensues as long as their report was done in good faith.

The new law states that if an individual witnesses a criminal act against a child as defined by the penal code and realizes that a crime is being committed, they must report what they saw or face criminal charges. The legislation is carefully worded to avoid any constitutional conflicts and is a serious attempt at enacting a revised reporting law that can withstand any legal challenges. It is unfortunate that we must compel individuals to report child abuse, but history has now taught us that the alternative is unacceptable.

In 2008 the CDC received three million reports of children being abused or neglected and 1,740 children died from abuse or neglect in that year. According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

2010 report on child abuse, children who were younger than one year old had the greatest incidence of victimization with 79.4% of child fatalities being children younger than four years old.

We need to bring the crime of child abuse out of the shadows and shatter the silence that has imprisoned our children and sentenced them to a lifetime of pain. In 2008 the CDC estimated the lifetime cost of child abuse for victims they studied over a one year period to be \$124 billion. As a society we are being bled of our most valuable resource, the innocence of a child, and we are slowly losing our grip on the future of our world.

The facts about pedophiles are alarming, and Jerry Sandusky has shown the world that a reputation and respect is no longer a bulletproof vest that can shield the evisceration of a child's innocence. The facts about sexual predators can make any parent feel as if they can trust no one around their children, and as a parent and a survivor I have felt that way at times. The reality is that we have to be educated and aware.

If we go hiking in an unfamiliar environment we research the dangers from venomous snakes, poisonous plants and dangerous wildlife. We have to take the same approach for pedophiles and make sure we know the signs of danger before it is too late.

Pedophiles are the embodiment of evil with many using respect as a disguise in order to vandalize childhoods as our untrained focus lays dormant. How do we begin to change the future for victims of child abuse?

Educate yourself as much and as often as possible and then educate others. There are many organizations that offer education and provide resources or both victims and the general public. [The National Center Sexual Violence Resource Center](#), [Dream Catchers for Abused Children](#), The Rape, Abuse and Incest National Network, [RAINN](#), [Male Survivor](#), and [Prevent Child Abuse America](#) are just a few who offer invaluable support and resources.

This article is the copyrighted property of the writer and Communities @ WashingtonTimes.com. Written permission must be obtained before reprint in online or print media. REPRINTING TWTC CONTENT WITHOUT PERMISSION AND/OR PAYMENT IS THEFT AND PUNISHABLE BY LAW.

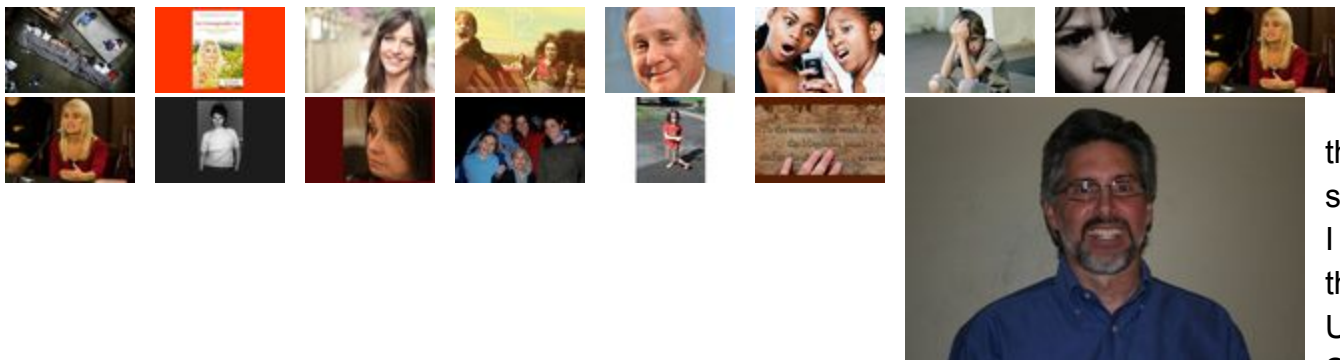


Photo: n/a

Raisec
in
the
south,
I joined
the
United
States
Marine

Corps at the age of seventeen and spent the next eight years seeing the world. After my enlistment was finished I attended college and graduated to work in the Biotechnology sector.

I have struggled against many things in my life including childhood sexual abuse and somehow I found a

way to survive. Writing is my passion and it keeps me in touch with the wealth everyone holds deep inside their hearts and minds.

I am married with two beautiful children, and they have made my life complete. I have written all my life and enjoy creating lyrics as well as novels. I enjoy spending time with my children and teaching them about music, art, nature and the value of family.

[Contact Jerome Elam](#)



Photo:
n/a

Error

Please enable pop-ups to use this feature, don't worry you can always turn them off later.

Who We Are

Communities is part of the digital only section of the WashingtonTimes.com contributed to by writers from around the country and the world. Communities Executive Editors are [Lisa M. Ruth](#) and [J.W. Picht](#). They may be contacted with questions or concerns.

- [IRS to get 'license to kill' groups that oppose Obama agenda](#)
- [Midseason replacement TV shows: Whats new for 2014?](#)
- [Why the Obama administration is terrified of the Bob Gates revelations](#)
- [PHILLIPS: Michelle Obama: A Queen comes to town](#)
- [Mark Levin is wrong: A lawless gov't, not the Constitution, needs nullified](#)



AP Top Stories January 9 A



Giffords
Skydives on
Shooting
Anniversary



Raw: Conjoined
Whales
Discovered,
Dead



Bullock,
Timberlake
Winners at
People's Choice



Cherished
Korean
Christmas
Memories
Gallery



Andrea
Bocelli at
Verizon
Center -
12/12/2013



The Waldorf
Astoria Spa

9 Photos



Slideshow:
Photos from
the 2013
Holiday Gift
Guide
featuring the
best video
game-, comic
book- and

- [Slideshow: Photos from the 2013 Holiday Gift Guide featuring the best video game-, comic book- and pop culture-themed gift ideas](#)

Photos from the 2013 Holiday Gift Guide featuring the best video game-, comic book- and pop culture-themed gift ideas

the slopes, relax and renew at the Waldorf Astoria Spa.

pop
culture-themed
gift ideas

include Sideshow Collectibles' Hulk Maquette, Hasbro's Anakin to Darth Vader figure and Uncle Milton's Spider-Man Web Creator Lab.

7 Photos



Advent
Harvest at the
Vine Church
of Petaluma,
California



Images from
St. Peter's
square, St.
Peter's
Basillica,
Vatican City,
Rome

- [Images from St. Peter's square, St. Peter's Basillica, Vatican City, Rome](#)

Images from St. Peter's square, St. Peter's Basillica, Vatican City, Rome
(September 2012/Jacque Kubin)

44 Photos



Normandy,
Giverny,
Monet's
Gardens



Pyramids and
Egypt

- [Pyramids and Egypt](#)

Historical treasures of Egypt.

8 Photos



Elton John,
Verizon
Center, DC -
Nov 2013

- [Elton John, Verizon Center, DC - Nov 2013](#)

Images for his Madman Across the Water Tour, November 2013.

25 Photos



Mt.
Rushmore -
Dave Bartruff



Bluefields
Bay Villas &
Patrick Marti:
Business &
Peace Corp
working
together to
make a
difference