

Gun Mags fly off the shelves



Activist Citizens Get Results -

Assault Weapon Magazines Removed From Store Shelves

Not "once upon a time" but several times, I passed the end of an aisle at one of our local super markets only to be highly offended by some magazines among many shelves loaded with periodicals of all descriptions. The shelf of my concern was filled with magazines that glorified lethal weapons with the capacities to kill fellow human beings. These were magazines whose covers featured high powered pistols, and large magazine assault rifles, etc. These magazines were not advertising hunting rifles nor items designed for sport of any kind.



My wife and I did some research by visiting the five largest super markets in our nearest municipality. We found three of them did not carry such offensive magazines while two did.

I shared my chagrin with others, and three of them agreed to go with me to present the managers of the stores with a letter requesting removal of the magazines from the shelves of their market designed to serve the needs of families, not hit men.

Several Thursdays ago, four of us, one black and one white woman, plus two white men, all ranging in ages from 64 to 82, went to visit a store manager, unannounced. We figured four was a good number. The two of us men wore ties and the women were dressed in a dignified manner. When we arrived at 10:00 A.M. in the morning, the regular manager was not there. However, sitting in for him was the manager of his sister super market from the other side of town, where there were no grisly gun magazines. One of the women in our group read our letter to the manager, and prefaced her reading by explaining that her dad had been a hunter, as well as a lifetime member of the NRA, and that she had cleaned guns with him and was comfortable with guns used for hunting, but not guns designed for killing other people.

Here is the text of the letter we presented:

"Dear (name of manager),

We, concerned citizens, are greatly anguished and incensed by the recent killings of black men in Louisiana and Minnesota, as well as five Dallas law officers, plus the wounding of seven other officers, and the still more recent killing of three police officers and wounding of three in Baton Rouge as well as others since then.

We also find extremely disturbing the many shootings right here in our municipality, the most recent of which was a murder that occurred in July of 2016. From July 4th, 2015 through the present, there were 14 incidents where shootings occurred. (Roughly one per month on average.) These resulted in three individuals having been shot dead and the infliction of 12 non-fatal injuries by bullet wounds.

What all these events had in common was the use of guns. We are addressing this open letter to you because the store you manage carries several magazines, out on your shelves, for public viewing, that glorify guns, and thus violence and cruelty. These strike us as just as obscene and as dangerous as it would be to have on public display, magazines highlighting and advertising child pornography.

Responsible gun owners may purchase their guns from appropriate local stores. There is no need to encourage supermarket shoppers to become more aware of the easy availability of a multiplicity of lethal weapons that are being used for shooting fellow human beings, right here in our city.

Please let us know by October 6th by mailing us that you have removed these offending magazines from your magazine racks. We will greatly appreciate your cooperation in this public spirited, public health and public safety activity. Any diminishment in gun violence in our area will make it more likely that more people, potential customers of yours, may choose to locate here.

Conversely, continued frequent gun violence will dissuade new people from moving in and increase the likelihood of individuals and families moving away to safer locations.

Our last observation showed that your store displayed in public view, "Guns and Ammo", "Handgunner", "Firearms News", "Shooting" and "Trigger". We hope you will discontinue carrying them and others like them.

Sincerely yours,

(Signed by all four of us.)

After we had a reading of our letter to the substitute manager, we all went over to the rack where there were at least 15 magazines of concern, more than when we first counted them. The manager looked at them, right across from kid stuff like crayons and at the end of a row of baby food and related supplies. Much to our surprise he said our letter was excellent and he agreed with us. Then, to our jaw-dropping amazement, he scooped up all the magazines and took them away, on the spot. He said he would put them on the regular manager's desk along with our letter and call an apparently important person, as well.



We had certainly not anticipated this remarkably positive response. We thought there might be outright rejection of our request or a long delay while the distributor of the magazines was consulted

The stand-in manager, who spoke with us, indicated that store managers have a say over which magazines are displayed in their stores, and do not have to take just anything the distributors put out.

We went back to the store four days later, and the shelf was still empty. This was very encouraging. However, my wife and I returned seven days after our first visit and at this time there was both bad news and good news.

The top shelf (end of aisle) was no longer empty. There were a couple of uninteresting magazines displayed there, but there were also three copies of "Shooting Times" where the cover said "7mm Madness" and featured many different pictures of shells (i.e. bullets). There

were also three copies of “Personal Defense” with the words “Carry” and “5 steps to Fortify Your Home” on the cover. The cover also included a very large picture of a pistol. Inside both magazines were advertisements for high capacity assault rifles and more.

Now for the good news. We talked with a very nice young man, who was on duty and in charge. We are familiar with him from regular shopping there. We then went with him to see the magazines and just like the week before, he scooped them up and said they shouldn’t be there and took them away upstairs to the manager’s office. He thought that the regular manager, to whom we wrote our letter, would not approve of the magazines. If he is right, then it was the magazine distributor who put those second ones there. For three subsequent weeks, no more gun-promoting magazines have appeared on the magazine rack.

Hopefully that means permanent absence from the supermarket of magazines promoting firearms that kill, wound, maim, and otherwise intimidate human beings.

Bolstered by our success, we prepared to go to the second super market in town which carried gun-glorifying magazines; and, for a different approach, we sent a letter ahead of time to the manager asking for an interview. We did not get a response in a reasonable time. Hence we all met at his store. We were readily granted an interview; and we made known to the manager our concern for the portion of his magazine shelves that included as many as ten copies of one of thirteen different, offending magazines. We all walked over to the shelf of our concern, where nearby were children’s books and across from it were crayons and other items for children.



When we first expressed our concern about the magazines we now all confronted, the manager said in a pleasant manner that he disagreed with us. However, after we made our presentation, much as before, and read our letter, very similar to our first one, he changed his mind and said that he would need to contact corporate headquarters and a source of legal advice, and that we should check back as soon as that afternoon to see if the magazines were still there.

The two women of our group had occasion to stop back later that afternoon and they beheld, to their great delight, empty space where the thirteen different gun-advocating magazines had been that morning. All of us were once again joy-filled.

In due time, one of us checked back-in at both stores to confirm that their managers had made lasting decisions with regard to no longer carrying publications advocating for devices made for killing, wounding, maiming, and intimidating fellow human beings. He was satisfied that one manager was intent on refraining from carrying such magazines and in the second

supermarket he found the manager was on vacation so he will check in again. He found none of the original offensive magazines on display.

A few last words. We hope those who read this reflection and support the activity, will make a careful survey of the magazine racks at their nearby supermarkets, plus other comparable stores, and consider gathering a few friends to make a supermarket visit similar to ours. Perhaps working in our favor was that we were all old enough to be serious shoppers and therefore not so easy to disregard. We also represented both sexes and two races, again making it harder to dismiss us as not serious. Ours was a small action, but one we found extremely gratifying.



Further, we had researched other stores to know the lay of the land in town, as it were. In addition, we had current input from the Chief of Police about gun-deaths and injuries which we believe added to our credibility. We suggest comparable inquiries would strengthen any similar attempt. We would be delighted to hear from any group who gave this small effort a try.

One final comment. We do not intend to submit our article to the local newspaper as we feel that might stimulate local enthusiasts for people-killing guns to visit supermarkets and encourage them to carry the very magazines we found so offensive. So, while we are sharing our article with others who live at a distance, we feel a low key approach on local publicity would best serve their interests.

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