

What Matters



Normally, I fill this space with my thoughts about the decking industry. Today, I can't face a blank computer screen and write about normal things. It is Monday. Last Friday a gunman killed 20 children and six adults at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Conn., 15 minutes from my home. That is close enough that I often rode my bicycle past the school when I commuted to my

previous job. Close enough that on Friday morning, when I was on my way to the University of Connecticut to pick up my son at the end of his semester, I wondered why there were so many state police cars in full lights-and-sirens mode flying down the other side of I-84.

I am lucky in that I have no close personal connection to the events of last Friday. One beautiful little girl shared my last name, but we were not related. The son of a friend attends a different school in Newtown, and

my hands shook when I imagined if it had been him — a bright, loving little boy whose favorite things in the world are tractors.

The truth is, it could have been any of our children, or any of our spouses, or any of us. The only relevant lesson I can dredge from this tragedy is to remember how fragile our lives are. When I was a contractor, I worked a ridiculous schedule and frequently missed events in my kids' lives. It wouldn't surprise me if many of you are no different. Honestly, I don't know if there's another way when you own a business. But always, always remember that while the point of your business is making a better life for your family, the material things you earn go only so far. Each day while you're on the way out the door, hug your kids and hug your spouse. That may be the last memory you'll have of them, or they of you.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Andy Engel". The signature is fluid and stylized, with a long horizontal line extending from the end.

Andy Engel
Editor

deckmagazine.com

How do your practices and preferences stack up against those of other deck builders?

Answer our Survey and Quick Vote

January Survey

What are the major economic signs you're seeing?

January Quick Vote

Will 2013 be a better year for business than 2012?

December Quick Vote Results

Do you have a standard minimum-size deck footing in your area?

YES - 75%

NO - 25%

Total votes - 20

Unlike most of the people you know, we want your two cents.

While it's nice to hear about what we're doing right, it's more interesting to hear about what we're doing wrong. If you saw something you loved or hated, or if you've got a tip that could help out other readers, we want to know.

E-mail us at prodeck@hanleywood.com or mail letters to: Professional Deck Builder, 186 Allen Brook Lane, Williston, VT 05495

Built a great deck?

We want to see it.

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