



## VIEWPOINT

BY SUSAN STRIKER

This past summer all of us were saddened and horrified to hear about campers right here in Fairfield being left unsupervised while their drunk counselors partied elsewhere. Also prominent in the news was the story of a counselor with a suspended driver's license who drove her campers on a camp outing at over 100 m.p.h. head-on into another car. I have over 40 years of experience teaching and running schools, and I still cannot get used to the casual manner in which parents entrust their children to camps and programs, including my own, without thoroughly checking into them.

In public schools, teachers are fingerprinted and have a thorough background check before being hired. Their credentials are validated regularly

and they will be fired if they do not keep them current.

In private schools however, we rely on the school administrator to do the hiring. Often, that very same administrator has no formal certification in school administration. With the proliferation of storefront schools teaching everything from music, dance and art to physical education, there is no way to know if the teachers have appropriate training or if even minimum standards for safety are being addressed. Nevertheless, these schools have cute names, slick brochures and Web sites, and parents sign their children up at them in droves.

I urge parents to check schools thoroughly; do not rely on slick ads, convenient schedules or sensitive-sounding brochure text to choose a