All our children need a fighting chance

My 10-year-old daughter was measured for a tailcoat uniform last week.

Why? Because after reading story after story of women and children being sexually abused in the past few months, I can no longer ignore the fact that is time to empower her physically to defend herself in case anyone ever tries to hurt her.

I realize that knowing a martial art is no guarantee that she will be able to overcome an attacker, but I have also come to understand that life is not a fairy tale. Some does a prince come to rescue a damsel in distress. Rather, as our policy of not keeping secrets, we teach them that although the world is full of helpers, sometimes people who appear to be helpers are not what they seem and daughters must rely on their wisdom and intuition to know the difference.

As our children begin to approach adolescence and seek more autonomy and independence, we struggle with our fear and desire to keep them at home safe in our care. But we also know that there are summer camps, slumber parties, prom dates and eventually, college waiting for them. We know that holding our children back from these events of emotional and social growth.

How then do we let them out of our sight in a world filled with people like Ariel Castro, members of the Steuben-Area High School football team, and the numerous rapists whose attacks in New Delhi and other places could stunt their emotional and social growth.

When confronted with evil, all of our children deserve a fighting chance.

Warren Binford

Guest Opinion

'Tov' guns are lethal playthings

CHICAGO — Two summers ago, my husband and I took our sons to a shooting range for firearms training with a certified instructor.

Our logic was simple: in our low-income community with a lot of gang activity, it was laughable to imagine that our boys wouldn't someday find themselves in a situation where a pal had brought a gun to school or asked them to come see his parent's gun.

Did we want them to become adults who could handle a deadly weapon? Was it the excitement of the first shot for the live gun - the time of our lives that we didn't want them to feel they were being asked to step away from the situation with full knowledge of the risks involved?

In the case of the Kentucky 5-year-old, it would be easy to be satisfied with thinking, as the local coroner told a reporter, that this incident was "just one of those things that happen". But that's just plain lazy.

You could blame the parents — according to news reports, the weapon was left loaded and sitting in a corner of their home. Proper firearms training instills safety habits such as never keeping loaded weapons out of view, where the untrained might stumble upon them and harm themselves or others.

But it's even more poignant that we provide our children with the tools they need to protect themselves. It's not just a fighting chance, it's the right thing to do.