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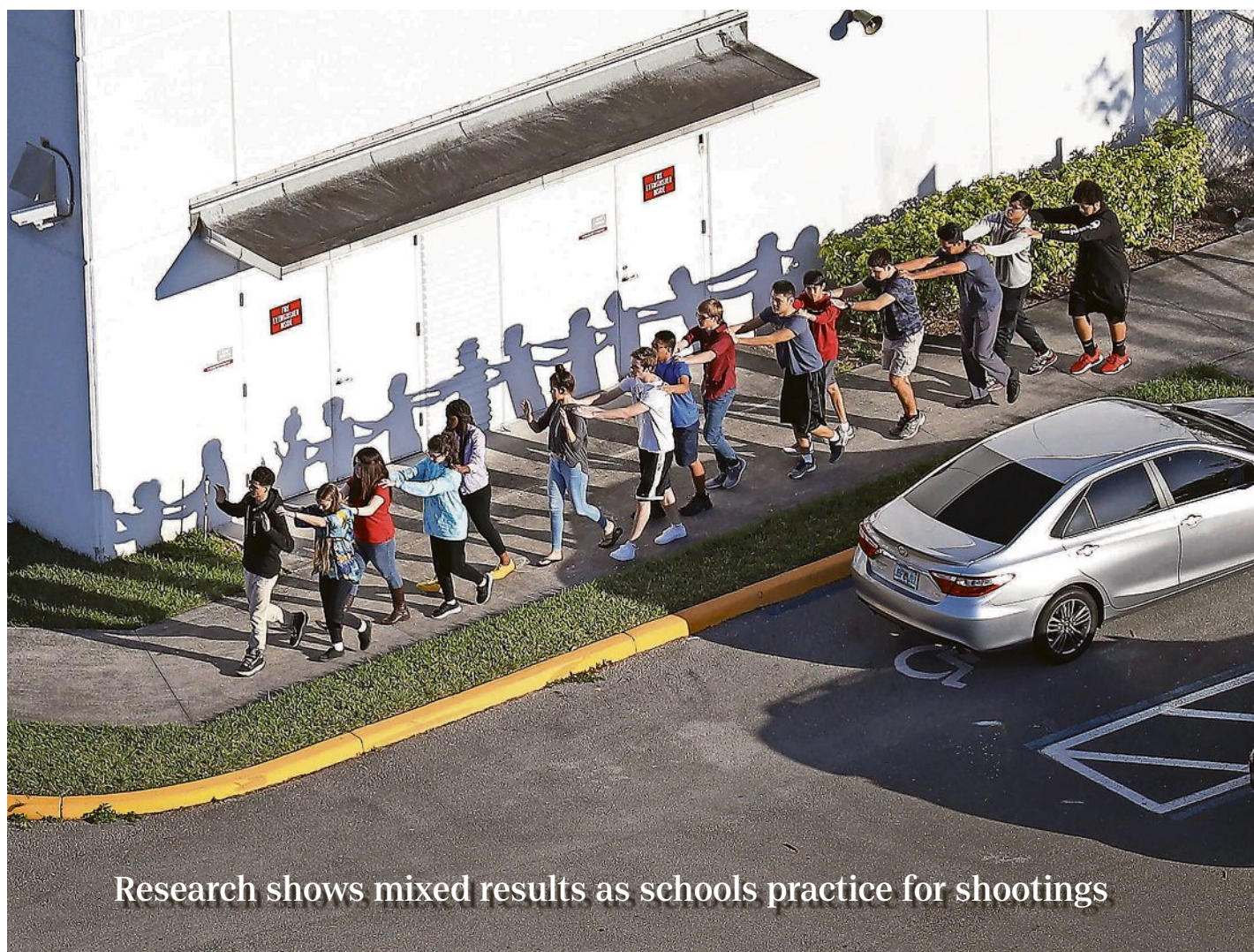
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# ATHENS BANNER-HERALD

TUESDAY, MAY 26, 2026 | ONLINEATHENS.COM

PART OF THE USA TODAY NETWORK

## THE LIMITS OF LOCKDOWNS



Research shows mixed results as schools practice for shootings

People are brought out of Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School after a shooting on Feb. 14, 2018, in Parkland, Florida. More schools nationwide began practicing lockdown drills after the Parkland shooting. JOE RAEDLE/GETTY IMAGES

James Densley

Metropolitan State University | THE CONVERSATION

There have been 63 school shootings – meaning any time there is gunfire on a school campus – so far in 2026. • They happen so often that preparing for one has become normal.

Students as young as 4 years old routinely practice for the possibility of a school shooting with lockdown drills – typically, hiding in the corner of a dark classroom, behind a locked door.

Pauls Valley High School in Pauls, Oklahoma, went into lockdown on April 7, after an armed gunman fired shots inside the building. Kirk Moore, the school's principal, tackled the gunman and got shot in the leg.

The lockdown and Moore's heroism clearly prevented any further violence in this rare school shooting situation with a positive ending. But by and large, do lockdowns typically work to keep students safe?

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Volunteer students wearing makeup to simulate injuries participate in a school shooting and mass evacuation drill at Lincoln Middle School in 2007 in Alameda, California. So far, the available research shows mixed evidence on whether shooting drills help students feel more prepared or scare them.

JUSTIN SULLIVAN/GETTY IMAGES



Former NFL player Jerome Bettis, center, chats with fans at Akins Ford Arena where a new professional football team was announced for Athens.

WAYNE FORD/ATHENS BANNER-HERALD

## Athens to get new football team

Wayne Ford

Athens Banner-Herald  
USA TODAY NETWORK

The Indoor Football League announced on Thursday amid the fanfare of live bands, performances by Michael Jackson and Elvis clones, that Athens will host a professional summer league football team in 2027.

The team, yet to be named and with no coach announced, was formed through finances from 10 investors, including former football players David Pollock, Jerome Bettis, and Brian Jordan. All three men attended an open public press conference at the Akins Ford Arena in downtown Athens on May 21.

The team is part of the IFL, founded in 2009, which now has 14 teams divided into Western and Eastern conferences in large cities like San Diego to mid-size cities like Tucson and Orlando. The team's commissioner, Todd Tryon from Sioux Falls, South Dakota, also attended the event.

Mike Sammond, the president, CEO, and co-owner of the Athens team, spearheaded the financial package and identified investors.

"Athens is a perfect market for indoor football because football is a religion in this area and we saw through the Athens Rock Lobsters how this market and this city put its arms around professional sports teams," he said.

"It's indoors, it's summer, and there's not much else to do in the Athens area in the summer," Sammond, a University of Georgia graduate, said.

See FOOTBALL, Page 2A

## UGA climatologist Pam Knox to retire after 25 years

Erica Van Buren

Athens Banner-Herald  
USA TODAY NETWORK

One of Georgia's most qualified climate change and weather experts is soon to step down after 25 years of working in the state.

Pam Knox, an agricultural climatologist with the Extension Office at the University of Georgia since 2001, is preparing to retire later this month.



Knox

Over the years, Knox has provided outreach and education on climate and its effects on crops and livestock throughout the Southeast. Her insights have helped shape agricultural and environmental policy.

Below is a question-and-answer session with Knox as she prepares for a new stage in her life. Editor's note: Answers

are edited for space and content.

**USA Today Network:** For readers who may not know, what does an agricultural climatologist do?

**Knox:** My degree is in meteorology from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. I learned a lot about climate when I served as the Wisconsin state climatologist from 1990 to 1996.

Wisconsin is similar to Georgia in terms of agriculture, although they grow different crops because it's colder. I

came to Georgia in 2001 to work as the assistant state climatologist in the Department of Biological and Agricultural Engineering. I stayed in that role until 2011.

From 2011 to 2017, I worked as a grant-funded scientist studying climate and agriculture. That's where I gained much of my background, through two grants — one from NOAA and one from the

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