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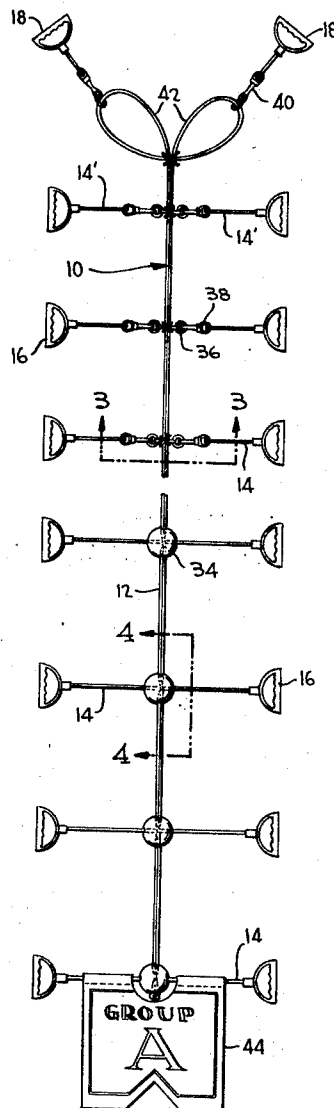
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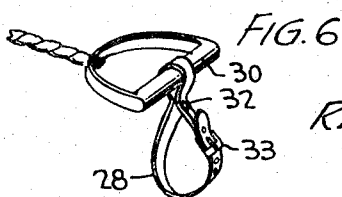
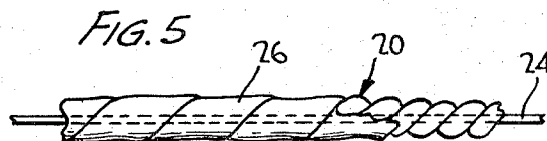
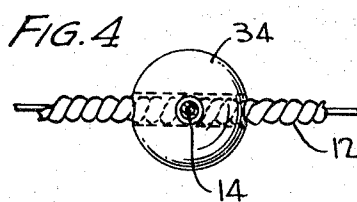
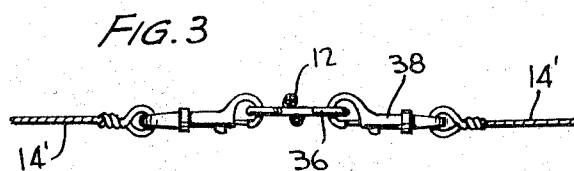
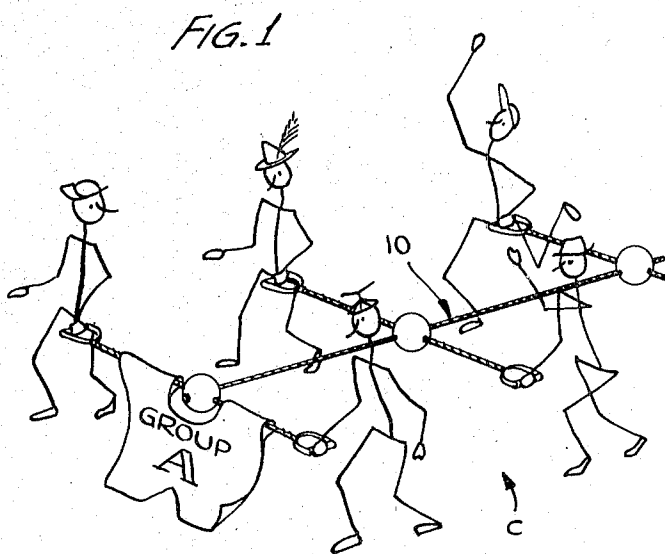
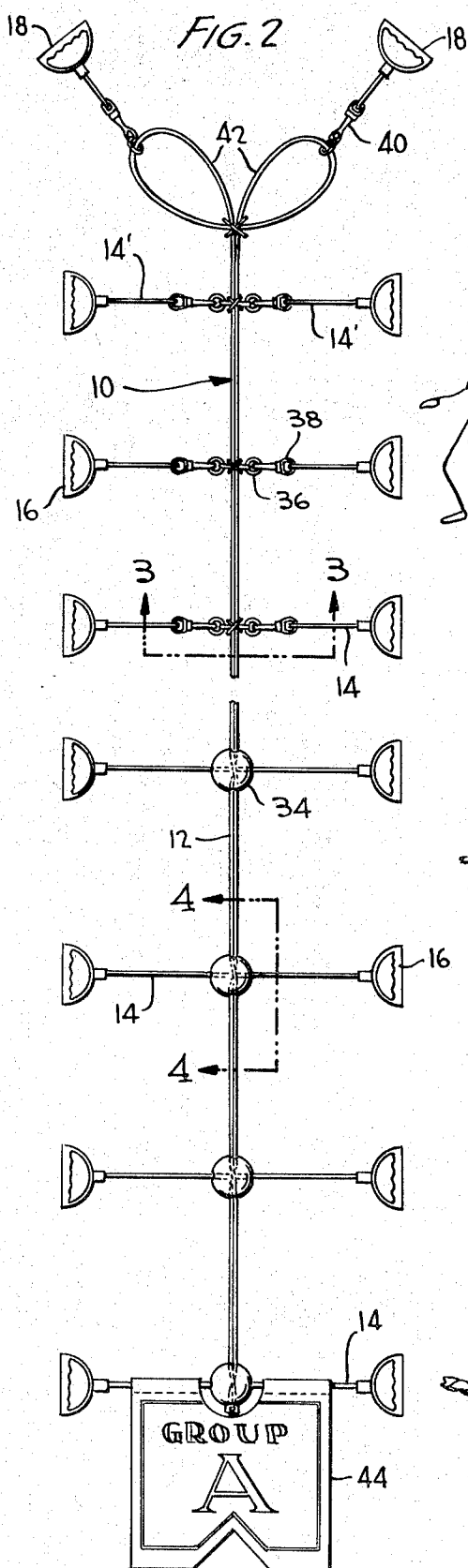
[54] **SAFETY YOUTH GUIDER**
11 Claims, 6 Drawing Figs.

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 54/52, 273/1
 [51] Int. Cl..... A01k 29/00
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 109; 54/52, 55; 273/1; 46/175

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ABSTRACT: A device for maintaining walking children in an organized, supervised group is disclosed having an elongated center support member, a plurality of laterally extending crossmembers secured along the length of the center support member and handles for children to grasp secured to the distal ends of the crossmembers. At least one of the grasping handles may be utilized by an adult, preferably at the rear end of the center support member. The crossmembers are preferably constructed of weatherproof rope having metal wire reinforcement at its center to maintain the same above the ground when dropped for easy retrieval. Such members are preferably color coded for easy identification by children; the device of the present invention finding particular utility in safely conducting and keeping track of relatively large groups of young children in public.





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SAFETY YOUTH GUIDER

The present invention relates to a device which enables one person to organize and safely conduct a relatively large group of young children.

Children of preschool and primary school ages are recognized for their lack of self-discipline and their need for close supervision particularly when in a group. Despite these tendencies, as a matter of daily practice, groups of such children must be entrusted to the supervision of a single person. Many activities of interest to children of this age level which necessitate the direction and control of a group of youngsters in public, e.g. visits to the zoo, museums, etc., must often be foregone for lack of a means to carry out such activities in a convenient safe and pleasant manner. Other than maintaining a small child-to-supervisor ratio, close to 1:1, there exists no practical method for organizing a group of young children other than the time-honored format of holding hands, a practice which rapidly loses the interest of the children and often precipitates serious disputes within the group itself.

It is the principal object of the present invention to provide a practical, safe and efficient means for organizing and guiding a group of young children in public.

The safety youth guiding device of the invention provides a means whereby one adult may conveniently supervise a relatively large group of children in an atmosphere where it is essential that the group remain close together to preclude the possibility of a member becoming lost, as for instance in large crowds, or to prevent exposure to dangerous areas such as heavily traveled streets or public transportation facilities. Moreover, the present device is of such a nature that it stimulates interest among the children, thereby engendering the essential cooperative spirit necessary to successfully conduct any venture involving young children.

The subject safety youth guiding device is of simple and reliable construction. All materials used are relative inexpensive, yet very durable while at the same time retaining a pleasant appearance. A preferred embodiment of the invention comprises an elongated center support member consisting of two parallel, contiguous lengths of rope having metal wire reinforcement at their centers, and, secured in spaced relationship along the longitudinal axis of the center support member is a plurality of laterally extending wire-reinforced crossmembers. Each crossmember has secured at its distal end a handle for a child to grasp. The reinforcement in the crossmembers has sufficient strength and springiness to maintain the same above the ground when released so that the handle may be easily retrieved by the child if it is dropped. The reinforcement in the centers members is sufficiently stiff to help maintain the proper longitudinal spacing in use, but still allow the device to be rolled up for storage.

At least one adult handle may be secured to a terminal end of the center support member. The laterally extending crossmembers are rigidly and nonrotatably fixed to the center support member by means of a molded plastic junction. However, in one embodiment some of the crossmembers are secured to the center support member in such a manner that the crossmembers may optionally be removed easily by an adult. Finally, each of the center and crossmembers is covered by a nonflammable, colored thermoplastic material for an attractive appearance and coding for direction of the children as to the proper position in the group.

The above and other objects, features and advantages of this invention will become more apparent as this description proceeds.

Referring now to the drawings:

FIG. 1 is a simulation of a portion of the subject guiding device being utilized to conduct a group of children;

FIG. 2 represents a top view of the entire basic guiding device;

FIG. 3 is a cross-sectional view taken along the line 3-3 in FIG. 2;

FIG. 4 is a cross-sectional view taken along the line 4-4 of FIG. 2;

FIG. 5 is a side view on an enlarged scale of a portion of the preferred stock material used to fabricate the skeletal members of the present device; and

FIG. 6 is a perspective view of an optional children's grasping means.

Referring now to the drawing, the youth guiding device of the invention, generally designated by reference numeral 10, is designed to be grasped and carried horizontally by a group of walking children C, as seen in FIG. 1. The guiding device 10, illustrated fully in FIG. 2, has a skeletal structure comprising an elongated center support member 12 and a plurality of laterally extending crossmembers 14 secured along the longitudinal axis of the center support member. At the extremities or distal ends of the crossmembers are secured grasping means 16 for each member of the group of children C. The center support member may be provided at one terminal end with grasping means 18 for adult supervisory personnel.

Fabrication of the skeletal portion of the present youth-guiding device may be accomplished by utilizing any conventional semirigid material, such as rodlike lines of natural or synthetic resins, wood, light metal rope, or the like. To achieve the necessary strength, rigidity and resiliency requirements, it is presently preferred to employ rope material which is reinforced along its longitudinal axis. Exemplary of such a material is that designated generally by the reference numeral 20 in FIG. 5. In that FIG. is shown a rope material 22 enclosing a reinforcing member or core of metal wire 24. Heavy duty rope having a 1/2 inch diameter is typical for such an application.

A rope material treated for resistance to weathering will enhance the durability of the present device, and furthermore, there may be provided upon the rope a covering of thermoplastic material 26, for example in the form of a tape binding, to increase both the durability and the aesthetic value of the device. An added measure of safety may be achieved by incorporating a flame-retarding agent within the rope material and/or the thermoplastic covering. With the various crossmembers 14 being of a different color, the children may be easily organized by instructions to grasp a certain color member.

The elongated center support member is conveniently made of one or more parallel contiguous lengths of rope or other material. It is presently preferred to utilize two lengths of the above-described wire-reinforced rope. Such a configuration provides a backbone having the necessary compromise between strength and flexibility. The reinforcement may be of sufficient resiliency or strength to tend to keep the crossmembers 14 spaced longitudinally to maintain token separation of the group. If a child gets too close to one in front or behind, the springiness of the center member, as well as of the crossmembers 14, gives a gentle force or tug in the opposite direction to urge the child back into position.

While it is to be understood that the center support member may be formed in any desired length, it is apparent from the standpoint of practicality that the length of the center support member, and hence the length of the guiding device, will seldom be shorter than 6 feet or longer than 30 feet.

The laterally extending crossmembers 14 are satisfactorily constructed of a single length of semirigid material, again wire-reinforced rope being preferred. Use of the latter provides a salient feature of the present invention, namely that when the crossmembers are secured to the center support member in a rigid and nonrotatable manner, as described below, as a result of the semirigid characteristics of the wire-reinforced rope, the crossmember 14 will be self-supporting in substantially horizontal alignment when the guiding device is in use. Thus, for example, were a child to temporarily lose his grip upon the device, the crossmember would not collapse, and return to the device can easily be achieved by the child alone. Further, in this embodiment the relative stiffness of the crossmembers 14 is such that the two laterally opposite children are maintained spaced apart so that two neat lines are formed.

The lateral crossmembers 14 may be formed in any convenient length, with lengths of about 2 to 3 feet being typical. Convenience also dictates the spacing of the crossmembers along the center support member, although too little separation is obviously not practical. Distances of from about 1½ feet to 2½ feet have proven most effective. It is not necessary that all of the crossmembers be equally distributed along the center support member.

Suitable grasping means for children may comprise conventional stirrup-type handles, as for example those designated by the reference numeral 16. A possible modification of the children's grasping means may be necessary where very immature or poorly disciplined children are to be included in a group under direction with the present guiding device 10. This modification, shown in FIG. 6, comprises an adjustable strap 28 which attaches to the a handle grip and is adapted to be secured around the wrist of a reluctant child. The strap is easily removable from the handle by means of the provided snap mechanism 32 and buckle 33.

The means used to secure the lateral crossmembers to the center support member constitute an important aspect of the present invention. To achieve the above-mentioned self-supporting character in the crossmembers, it is necessary to secure them to the center support member in a rigid or non-rotatable manner. This is most expeditiously done by forming a molded junction 34 of plastic material around the intersection of the crossmember 14 with the center support member 12 (see FIG. 4). The junction 34 thus forms a base from which the resiliency of the crossmembers 14 can be gained and the transfer of force between the center member 12 and said crossmembers 14 is possible to keep the children spaced properly.

An optional feature to be inclined within the scope of the present invention resides in the provision of optionally attachable crossmembers to expand the capacity of the guiding device. These additional crossmembers are designated by reference numeral 14' and are identical to those previously described except for their mode of attachment to the center support member 12. Attachment of the optional members 14' is achieved by means of metal rings 36 fixed to the center support member 12 and suitable hooking means 38 attached to the interior end of the crossmember 14'. The hooking means is preferably a metal harness hook having a swivel base and an automatic spring safety lock (see FIG. 3).

The grasping means 18 for one or more adult supervisors may, for example, conveniently comprise handles similar to those used by the children only appropriately sized for adult hands. The handles may be secured to the center support member by any suitable means, such as a hook and ring assembly similar to that employed on the optionally connectable crossmembers discussed above. In a presently preferred embodiment, the handles for adults are secured by means of a harness hook 40 to a double loop configuration obtained by using a continuous length of rope folded at its midpoint to form the double component center support member 12. If only a small number of children are involved, and therefore the optional crossmembers not used, the adult supervisor's handles may be secured to the metal rings provided along the length of the center support member to conveniently shorten the guiding device so that optimum control may be exercised according to the group size. Also, of course, if desired and it seems advisable, the adult supervision can be given without direct hold on the guiding device 10, whereupon the handles 18 can be used by additional children.

Several additional features may be included in the present device to aid in identification of both groups and individual members, and also to stimulate interest among the members of a group. One feature consists of a banner 44 which may be attached to the foremost crossmember and carries group identifying indicia such as school name and/or grade, den numbers,

etc. As mentioned above, a further aid to the group supervisor in identifying and directing individual members of the group is possible when each of the cross members 14 is color coded with a different color, as for example by utilizing the colored thermoplastic covering material 26.

A typical youth guiding device 10 of this invention may be one having a length of about 11½ feet, eight rigidly bonded crossmembers, 14 arranged in oppositely secured pairs at 2-foot 3-inch intervals along said center support member, six optionally removable crossmembers 14' secured in paired relationship at 1-foot 1½ inch intervals along the center support member, and the two handles 18 for adult supervisors secured to a looped configuration in the rear end of the center support member 12. The children C are kept separated and orderly by the resilient nature of the members 12, 14, to provide a safe and orderly manner for youngsters to be guided by minimum adult supervision.

While preferred embodiments of the invention have been shown and described, it will be appreciated that minor changes and modifications may readily suggest themselves to those of ordinary skill in the art. For example, additional features may be included such as the incorporation of luminescent material to enable use of the guiding device after dark. It is intended to encompass all such changes and modifications as fall within the spirit and scope of the appended claims.

I claim:

1. A device of for safely organizing and guiding a group of children, said device comprising an elongated center support member, a plurality of laterally extending crossmembers secured in spaced relationship along the longitudinal axis of said center support member, and grasping means for children secured to the extremities of said laterally extending crossmembers

2. A youth guiding device according to claim 1 wherein is further provided at least one grasping means for an adult secured to a terminal end of said center support member.

3. A youth guiding device according to claim 1 wherein said elongated center support member comprises a pair of semirigid lines in parallel contiguous relationship, each rope being reinforced along its longitudinal axis with a resilient core.

4. A youth guiding device according to claim 1 wherein each of said laterally extending crossmembers comprises a line having a resilient core along its longitudinal axis.

5. A youth guiding device according to claim 4 wherein securing means comprising molded plastic junctions are employed to secure said crossmembers to said center support member in a rigid and nonrotatable manner.

6. A youth guiding device according to claim 4 wherein said crossmembers comprise pairs of lines secured to opposite sides of said center support member.

7. A youth guiding device according to claim 1 further comprising at least one crossmember secured to said center support member by a means providing for detachment of said crossmember.

8. A youth guiding device according to claim 1 wherein said center support member and said laterally extending crossmembers are covered with thermoplastic material.

9. A youth guiding device according to claim 8 wherein said thermoplastic covered members are color coded for identification purposes.

10. A youth guiding device according to claim 1 wherein said center support member is of one piece, the rear end of said guiding device terminating in double looped configuration, a grasping handle attached to each loop.

11. A youth guiding device according to claim 1 wherein at least one of said grasping handles for children further comprises an adjustable strap adapted to fit around a child's wrist and secure the child to said grasping handle.