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Beachwood Responds to Chardon Tragedy

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Beachwood High School

Beachwood, Ohio

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As the tragedy of the Chardon shooting unfolded last month, BHS students and staff learned that even though the shooting occurred 25 miles from Beachwood, our community was also affected.

On the morning of Feb. 27, T.J. Lane, a 16-year-old alternative school student, entered the cafeteria at Chardon High School where students were waiting for buses to take them to enrichment programs. At 7:30 a.m., Lane pulled out a gun and opened fire in the cafeteria, shooting five students and causing mass panic.

A teacher chased Lane out of the cafeteria and into a hallway, where Lane shot another student. The teacher continued to chase until Lane left the school building. Lane fired at the teacher but missed.

The school went into lockdown mode. Police took over the building, and helicopters descended on the schoolyard. Parents and relatives began to get news of the shooting and raced to the school, anxiously waiting to learn whether or not their loved ones were okay. The shooting claimed the lives of three students and injured several others.

BHS special education assistant Domenick Iammarino soon learned that his grandson, Daniel Parmertor, a 16-year-old student at Chardon High School, was one of the three students shot and killed. Also killed were Demetrius Hewlin, age 16, and Russell King, Jr., age 17.

Iammarino recalled, "That morning, the call came in that my grandson had been flighted to MetroHealth. The panic in the voice of my daughter, who called, was unreal. An hour later, I got another call from my other daughter who was at the hospital too, and she said 'He's gone.' The shock... I literally fell back in a chair. February 27 was absolutely the worst day of my life."

Iammarino described his grandson as a quiet but funny kid with a good sense of humor. He said that his grandson liked to ski, was good with computers and was

taking an advanced computer class.

“He was known in the family as the one to call for problems with computers and other ‘fix-it’ stuff—he was a natural at that,” said lammarino.

The impact of this shooting on lammarino, a long-time high school wrestling coach currently coaching the middle school team, was deeply emotional for the wrestling team.

“It was a couple of days before the state tournament, so we really didn’t know what to do because we knew Coach I. wouldn’t be able to go,” said Co-Captain David Shapiro, one of four Beachwood wrestlers who was preparing for the state tournament at the time of the shooting. “He had been to every state tournament since the 70s. We felt weird because this was a very special year for the team and we really wanted him to be there.”

“We were able to get shirts that said “Beachwood Wrestling” on the front and “Forever Remembered” with Chardon’s logo and Danny’s initials on it,” Shapiro said. “And we had the same thing on our singlet, which was just a little badge. We wanted to let Coach I, the Parmertor family and all of Chardon know that we supported them, and that we just hope for the best.”

BHS Oculus adviser and D/HH instructor Sarah Thrasher also has a Chardon connection. She is a 2001 graduate of Chardon High School, and her mother now works in that school’s cafeteria. Thrasher said that her mother knows all of the students in the school and was upset by the shooting.

After the shooting, Thrasher brought a poster to hang in Chardon High School. Thrasher commented, “I walked through the whole high school and went into the cafeteria to see it all for myself first hand. The hallways were covered with cards and banners. One of the hardest things to see was Russell King Jr.’s locker. It was completely decorated with red and black, and all of his friends had written

messages.”

Thrasher thought that the shooting was especially difficult because the students knew the shooter. She said, “It wasn’t just a random person walking in—it was someone they knew.”

Thrasher hopes some good will come out of the tragedy. She said, “We have to focus on what’s ahead and be positive. I think the relationships between students and teachers will probably change, and kids will be kinder to other kids.”

BHS Principal Robert Hardis believes that the procedures followed at Chardon were good ones, and were carried out quickly and effectively. He wants BHS students and their families to know that Beachwood’s Police Department and SWAT team conduct drills in the high school to practice the procedures that are in place for emergencies. Hardis explained the goal is to shut the classroom doors quickly, get students out of hallways, and isolate and stop the shooter.

On the day of the Chardon shooting, Hardis met with BHS teachers and staff to review emergency procedures. “If something horrible should happen, we’re as ready as we can be,” said Hardis. Acknowledging that shootings can happen anywhere, Hardis said that schools are “one of the safest places you can be.”

Hardis encouraged BHS students to contact an adult if another student seems intent on hurting himself/herself or someone else.

“Tell any adult—tell your parents, tell a teacher, tell a principal, tell a custodian. Adults know what to do to get the information in the right hands to try to prevent something like the Chardon shooting,” he said.

Hardis assures students that he will do everything that he can to see that they remain anonymous and that their information is confidential. Hardis asks students to take a “leap of faith” and trust adults with the information. Hardis says

that he would rather talk to a student about something that turns out not to be a risk, rather than not talk to a student and have a dangerous situation.

Iammarino is grateful for the outpouring of love and support given to him by the Beachwood community. He said, "It's what I always knew—that Beachwood is a community of great people. I have gotten calls, cards from former students, kids I coached—it's amazing. I've been here over 40 years. In the mail to my home, I've gotten maybe over 120 cards, mostly from Beachwood people."

Iammarino also shared a touching story about how kind people have been to him. He said, "Shortly after the tragedy, my wife and I ordered food from Maggiano's in Beachwood. We had plans to have a lot of food to feed 10 to 15 people we expected might be at my daughter's house in Chardon. I was ready to pay, but the manager was so moved by my story that he said that I didn't have to pay for the food. They donated a couple hundred dollars worth of food, delivered it, and added extras that I didn't even order."

Like Iammarino, Thrasher appreciates the support given to the Chardon community by people in Northeast Ohio. She added, "I think that it is important for everybody to remember that tragedies can happen anywhere—the perfect example being Chardon. Chardon is the last place I would have ever imagined something like this happening—such a warm, loving community, so close, and yet, unfortunately, these tragedies do happen in society. I think that what is important for everyone to remember is the support that Chardon has received and the love that surrounding communities have provided. It really shows that Northeast Ohio is a great place to live."