



# The High School View

The High School View is staffed and prepared entirely by students from the Martha's Vineyard Regional High School, and published on their behalf by The Martha's Vineyard Times, with the generous assistance of the sponsors whose names appear below.

## Connecticut tragedy impacts schools

BY LILY BICK AND JULIA COOPER

This Monday Principal Nixon's voice rang through the school's speaker system calling for a moment of silence for students and faculty to reflect upon the great tragedy that took place on Friday. A shooting occurred in the small Connecticut town of Newtown, killing 26 people inside Sandy Hook Middle School. Twenty of the victims were children. This was the second most deadly school shooting in US history.

High school senior Kathryn Antonsson said, "I felt that the moment of silence was needed and respectful. It was the right thing to do not to ignore the tragedy. I would like to see the school reach out in whatever way possible to help the families of the victims."

According to CNN news, Newtown is a small town with a tight-knit community. A resident of Newtown said, "Stuff like this does not happen in Newtown." Unfortunately, stuff like this can happen anywhere. The country has responded to the tragedy. President Obama shed tears on national television, thinking of his own children, and asked for flags to be lowered to half-mast. The United Way of Western Connecticut has set up the "Sandy Hook School Support Fund, and individuals around the country have been praying and offering support to the families of the victims and to the Newtown community.

On the Island, people have responded with sadness, anger and confusion. Said regional high school senior, Sarahrae Gruner, "Of course I feel terrible for the families and everyone affected but America needs to start planning for the future. There have been too many of these incidents in the past 5-10 years."

High school senior Maddie Webster said, "I found out when I was wrapping presents for the toy drive after school, and after my initial reaction of shock and disgust, I looked around at all of the presents with Sammi Chaves and Amy Lilavois and there was this mutual sense of grief as we connected our actions to the tragedy. We were wrapping gifts for local families who couldn't afford presents for the holidays, and then you have a situation in Newtown where there's a couple dozen families that may have the means to buy presents but don't have the children to give them to or perhaps the parent to open them with."

Teacher at the Edgartown School and parent of three, Darren Belisle, said, "When I found out about the tragedy, my youngest son was working with his classmates in the computer lab, which is right outside my office door. I went out and gave him a hug and

a kiss. This tragedy made me visualize what I might have to do if that nightmare happened at our school, and that made me sick to my stomach. It makes me angry knowing that someone can be such a senseless coward, and it's a little scary, knowing that this can happen anywhere, with students at any age."

Nedine Cunningham, also a teacher at the Edgartown School, said, "It was very hard as a teacher to continue my classes without knowing what was going on. It will be



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difficult for me to decide how much I should discuss this incident with my students. It's hard to tell at what point you stop educating them of the dangers of society and start making them afraid to come to school. We need to mourn these deaths before the entire thing becomes politicized. But this should definitely lead to a conversation about gun control."

Parent Peter Webster said, "I'm hopeful on a national scale our leaders will step up to the plate and do something

about gun control. It's too easy to get a gun. Assault rifles should be banned. It is never too early to start a conversation about gun control, "Some argue that this is an issue of personal liberty, but what about public safety?"

Other Islanders have speculated the issue is not gun control, but rather access to mental health services. Said regional high school senior Kevin Burchill, "I thought it was a disgusting act of violence that could've been prevented if [the killer] had sought psychological care. Because no one in their right mind would do such a disgusting act like that if they were sane."

Other Islanders are concerned about school security. The doors of the regional high school are locked during the day to prevent intruders from entering the building. Said Jude Tucker, an Island parent, "As we've learned, entry to the school was by force. I'm not sure that this country is ready to make all of our schools barricaded fortresses. And it seems that anything less wouldn't have stopped Friday's tragedy."

Regardless of the political and societal implications of the tragedy in Newtown, it has not gone unrecognized as horrific by Island residents. Said senior Maddie Webster, "Everyone is devastated, all around the country and the Island is no different." **HSV**

## Responding to crises

Following the Newtown tragedy, it is important that we take into account emotionally struggling individuals. If a student appears over-tired or fatigued; withdrawn, sullen, sad or out of character; loses interest in usual school activities or friends; displays any new behaviors such as cutting or other self-destructive behavior; or uses language that indicates hopelessness, use the following advice.

- Limit your child's exposure to the news, but always tell the truth.
  - When frightening events occur, watch your own reaction when children are nearby.
  - Give comfort and reassurance.
  - Emphasize safety rather than destruction.
  - Channel information in positive directions whenever possible.
  - Take positive action: make a donation, write a letter, attend a comforting memorial or service.
  - Ensure that your communications are age appropriate.
  - Keep an eye on children and gauge their reactions.
  - End conversations on a note of hope and reassurance.
  - Consider professional counseling if your child is severely upset.
- Excerpted from the Employee Assistance Group website*

## No child sits alone

BY OLIVIA JACOBS

For many high-school students, lunch is a time for socializing and relaxing, but for some, it is an exclusionary environment. This month, the students at regional high school have been given a challenge—ensure that no student sits alone at lunch (unless,

of course, they prefer to). A poster on the bulletin board outside of the cafeteria encourages students to take part in the challenge and then sign their names after participating. The Lunchroom Challenge is sponsored by the Peer Outreach program.

Amy Lilavois, school adjustment counselor and

head of the Peer Outreach program, came up with the challenge. Ms. Lilavois said, "Students had been saying that the cafeteria is the scariest place in the school, and I thought, 'Why can't other students help that?'" She ran the idea by a few students and brainstormed with senior Dana Jacobs, a member of Peer Outreach, who made the poster. Ms. Lilavois said, "I hope the challenge will get kids

thinking about [the idea] so that it will eventually become second nature." Students learned about the challenge when Peer Outreach members posted about it on Facebook. So far, over 30 student names appear on the poster.

Students who have participated have given the Lunchroom Challenge mixed reviews. One student, who wishes to remain anonymous, said, "I feel

like I wasn't as successful in participating as I had hoped. I didn't get the feeling as though the person [who I sat next to] really cared for my company, and it was difficult to socialize with them. There is a difference between doing something nice for the credit and doing something nice just to be nice."

In contrast, sophomore Gabby Hoxsie made a new friend by participating in

the challenge. She said, "We became friends after sitting together and talking about school, clubs, and sports. Now, he says 'hi' to me in the hallway. I felt like I was doing something positive and helping someone else out." She gave the Challenge high ratings and said, "I think it's great that other students have been getting into it and making our school come together and engage." **HSV**

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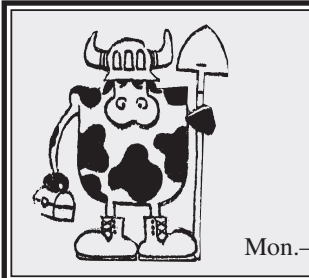
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