

A Word From Sandy Hook

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It has become clear over the last couple of days that Sandy Hook Elementary School and Newtown have become an area of great concern locally, nationally, and internationally. We as a world community need to go through a grieving process that includes this type of sharing, especially for parents out there.



Editors Note: There has been extensive coverage by the general media of the recent tragedy in Newtown, Connecticut. We didn't think we could add anything new that our readers have not heard or read in the past few days. However, when we read this very eloquent internal UBM blog from one of our colleagues who lives in Newtown and whose children go to Sandy Hook Elementary School, we thought we would share it with our readers.

I woke up this morning believing this to be the right forum to share some thoughts with my friends and colleagues close and far. It has become clear over the last couple of days, that my town has become an area of great concern locally, nationally, and internationally, and I am realizing that we as a world community need to go through a grieving process that includes this type of sharing, especially, I believe for those who are parents out there.

My 2 youngest children (1st and 3rd graders) were at Sandy Hook School on Friday, and are alive and safe, thank God. Sadly, too many of our little friends are not. It has become clear now, that our suspicions have been confirmed and this evil was focused on my little 1st grader's friends. I cry as I write this, as he sits with his siblings watching TV, unaware yet that the beautiful faces that surround him in his Kindergarten class picture from last year are gone from us.

Dear, dear friends. Dear, dear souls.

It has been surreal to see our sleepy little town on the TV non stop. Our park, our firehouse, our "2-horse" Sandy Hook Center intersection, our St Rose of Lima Church, and yes, our beloved elementary school—all overrun with satellite trucks, helicopters, and reporters from around the world.

If this had been just adults, I can tell you that if you had ever met Dawn Hochsprung, the children's principal, who lost her life as she ran immediately into the gunfire, you would drop to your knees in grief. This was not a paper pusher. It is hard to imagine a woman filled with more passion, love, and inspiration for her job and for OUR children. We can all use her as an example, without any question, of how we should view our jobs—whatever we do. I know from first-hand account, from a parent that was in the meeting with the principal, school psychologist, and a teacher at the time, that these

educators ran out of the room, immediately and directly into gunfire as soon as it started. Who of us could do this?

As for the children, all I can say is in the last 2 days, every time my 6-year-old has bumped his knee or had the basketball bump his nose, and he bursts into the normal crying and tears of a barely hurt 6-year-old, I hide my face and cry, as my heart breaks a thousand times in thoughts of those innocents.

To quote one of the poor, poor parents who were not one of us lucky ones that found our little ones' faces at the firehouse on Friday, comforting a grieving brother, "She can never be hurt again; she is in a place where she can be protected much better than her parents could have ever protected her." Our Pastor who was there for that, let us know it was okay to cry, and he had been doing that a lot, so I have taken it to heart as well.

God bless the surviving teachers. I won't go into detail here, but I will only say that their bravery and love for OUR children was unbelievably courageous in the face of this evil.

I should also say, that it is overwhelming to see the response of the community, state, nation, and world.

In the Aftermath

We are taking advantage of the counseling that is being offered, and the loving care given by the counseling volunteers to those grieving. (We realize now, we are attending out of necessity not curiosity.) The "children's safe zone," filled with loving volunteers for children, is absolutely astounding in its tender, understanding organization.

I do not write this to upset anyone. I do not write this soliciting response. I write this again out of a growing understanding, that we all need to hold onto each other and share in this tragedy.

Please know that Newtown is an amazingly strong community. Since we moved here, I have been amazed by the charity and hearts of the community and our church. The residents of Newtown have always been extremely active in charity and offering help to those in need. Most recently my church filled 2 giant trailers with donated items and money for our brothers and sisters who experienced such loss in Far Rockaway after Hurricane Sandy. Those who personally delivered the items reported back huge lines of immensely thankful people, who had said that the government and agencies were nowhere in sight. People helping people. People loving people.

What can you do for Newtown/Sandy Hook? Well, my wife and I and the community simply say this—pray, continue to pray, do not stop praying for those lost children, teachers, and administrators, and their families.

And of course, hug and kiss your children. Right now. The world has so much good in it. Let them know it.

I have to go now. We're having ice cream and French fries for breakfast.

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