

One year later: Springfield is still working to overcome tragedy

On May 21, 1998, Springfield experienced a 57-minute emergency incident that turned into a multi-week media event watched around the world.

Today, Springfield marks the one-year anniversary of the tragic shooting at Thurston High School.

Tonight, many of us will come together in a Community Gathering for Remembrance and Renewal. We'll remember Bill and Faith Kinkel and Mikael and Ben, the four people who lost their lives, and we will think about how that senseless act changed us all forever.

But we'll do more tonight than remember our lost loved ones and seek relief from the pain of the last year. When we gather, we'll find the strength and renewal that emerges each time our community comes together.

We'll renew our determination not to succumb to the hopelessness that can be overwhelming in the face of an act of violence so severe it numbs the senses. And we will celebrate what we have learned about ourselves and our community since May 21, 1998.

Last year, when we were faced with the unthinkable, literally dozens of community members closed ranks around Springfield. City employees worked around the clock, volunteers organized a candlelight vigil and members of the faith community sponsored a service at the high school.

Still other volunteers counseled distraught children and parents, helped at an assistance center opened at the high school and lent their professional skills to manage close to \$500,000 in

spontaneous offers of financial assistance.

Our extraordinary ability to come together in a crisis could be seen all over the world in the seamless way we responded to not one but two crime scenes (one the largest in Springfield's history). We interviewed more than 250 eyewitnesses in the first 24 hours, managed a virtual invasion by hundreds of news reporters, and even responded with concrete written proposals when asked by the White House and our federal delegation what the government can do to help prevent school violence.

As the days wore on and the lives of Springfield residents became the subject of relentless news broadcasts, we realized we were subject to a feeling of hopelessness. We faced the enormity and complexity of the issues affecting every community in the United States: deteriorating fami-

ly values, access to guns, reduced resources for schools and recreation programs and violence in the media and video games. We struggled with feelings of helplessness against such odds.

But we organized a community forum just 10 days after the shooting and invited federal, state and local elected officials to join us in listening. Dozens of Springfield residents cared enough to attend and wait patiently for their turn at the microphones.

We narrowed and prioritized the list of ideas in a second community forum and then presented that information to those working on a Community Action Plan for Youth and Families in Springfield. Copies of the draft plan will be on hand at the open house this evening.

Tonight, together, we will think about what we've learned in the last year:

■ That in the face of horrible, horrible tragedy, Springfield moves swiftly to respond to the needs of the community with a gentleness and attention to detail more characteristic of family taking care of family.

■ That we value our partnerships with Eugene and Lane County and other public and private organizations, and we work those relationships everyday because it's a way of life for us and because we're all in this together.

■ That sadly, Springfield is not unique in experiencing the horror of school violence, and its randomness is humbling.

■ Finally, that each of us has the power to do at least one thing to make a difference in the lives of youth and families, and that this makes all the difference in the world.

Maureen Maine is the Springfield mayor.

Commentary Maureen Maine

Diversity

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es," Bachelder said.

The University of Maryland, Harvard University and the University of Kansas already have diversity programs.

The University of Maryland at College Park set up a Web site to catalog its efforts at increasing diversity. University of Oregon President Dave Frohnmayer proposed a similar Web site on Tuesday.

Student activists are also demanding the administration create a position in Johnson Hall with the express purpose of promoting diversity.

Students and administrators formed other joint committees to confront the issues Wednesday.

"Johnson Hall is where the administration is, and we need a voice in there," Bachelder said.

Robert Melnick, dean of the School of Architecture and Allied Arts and a member of the committee, said he felt the process was on the right track.

"There is a need for this to be inclusive," he said.

The planning, public policy and management class where the first remark and sexually violent threats sparked the sit-in on Tuesday met for another day of class — closed to the media.

With a new class e-mail listserv retooled for added security and Lynn Brown, an officer from the Office of Pub-

lic Safety, watching the class, students discussed what to do next.

"It is almost impossible to go from what happened Tuesday and just jump back into class," said John Hibbard, one of the class' two professors.

Convy, the student who reportedly e-mailed racist and sexual threats to several female students in the class, is taking the course by correspondence from home. Student Scott Bones made the initial comments that were called racist, but he has apologized to the class. Neither student could be reached for comment.

One topic of concern in the class was the faculty's lack of diversity and diversity awareness.

"How much do these issues of privilege affect our understanding of each other?" asked student John Riordan. "We need an enriched faculty community which understands and doesn't hide from these issues."

Elizabeth Rocha, the class' other professor, said she thought by next Tuesday the class would be more focused on the curriculum, but she was critical of the current University curriculum.

"The reason this exploded is because many people go through four years in this school never having to deal with issues of race and gender," she said. "That's an indictment of the curriculum and that's an indictment of the University."



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