

Mothers' activism takes aim

By Amy Westfeldt
The Associated Press

SHORT HILLS, N.J. — It took an unforgettable image of young children escaping a racist gunman to transform Donna Dees-Thomases from a wealthy suburban mother into a grassroots activist.

The image was from Aug. 10, when a white supremacist opened fire on a Jewish Community Center in Granada Hills, Calif.

Dees-Thomases was flipping channels when she saw the video of children the same age as her daughters crossing the street hand-in-hand with police officers.

"These were my kids crossing the street," Dees-Thomases said. "My kids go to a JCC. Anybody could walk in. It was just crazy."

One week later, Dees-Thomases registered a Web site and launched the Million Mom March campaign. The grassroots effort is expected to become the nation's largest gun control demonstration to date.

The Mother's Day rally is expected to draw 100,000 people to the National Mall in Washington, D.C. Other demonstrations are scheduled in 20 cities nationwide, including Tulsa, Okla., Los Angeles, Denver and Portland, Ore.

The group is pressing Congress for stricter gun control, including measures to require all handgun owners be licensed and registered, require built-in child safety locks and limit handgun purchases to one per month.

"Mothers are certainly an important voice in this debate, and they are a voice that has not been very strong until this point," said Shannon Frattaroli, researcher at the Center for Gun Policy and Research at Johns Hopkins University.

National Rifle Association spokesman Bill Powers said the organization was unconcerned about the appeal of the May 14 rally.

"It is one of the great freedoms of America" to express oneself politically, he said.

Prior to the Granada Hills shooting, Dees-Thomases considered herself rather apolitical. Today, her cluttered basement office is adorned by bright pink posters and T-shirts reading, "We're looking for a few good moms."

Dees-Thomases, a part-time publicist for David Letterman's late-night talk show, chose the name Million Mom March to borrow on the success of the Million Man March rally for black empowerment in Washington in 1995, and the subsequent Million Youth March.

The campaign has grown — mostly by word of mouth — to at least 500 mothers working out of their homes and out of an office in Washington, D.C.

The group also has received a \$300,000 grant from the Funders' Collective for Gun Violence Prevention, part of the nonprofit Open Society Institute established by billionaire George Soros. It also sells T-shirts for \$25, the same price as an annual NRA membership.

"This is just common sense. These are handguns," she said. "This is just stuff that should have been done 25 years ago."



MONDAY

WRITE PAPER FOR SOCIOLOGY



TUESDAY

SPEND TIME WITH JACK



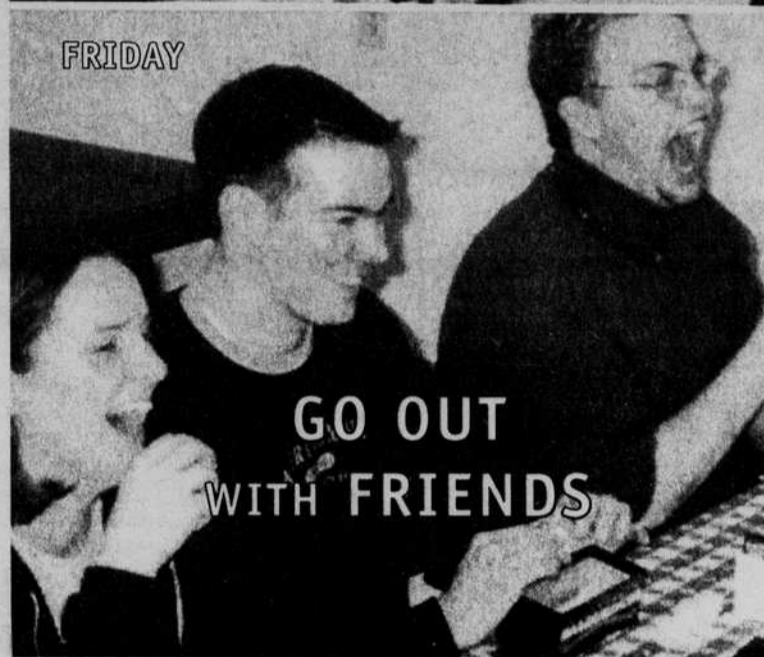
WEDNESDAY

START MAKING CONTACTS FOR SUMMER JOB



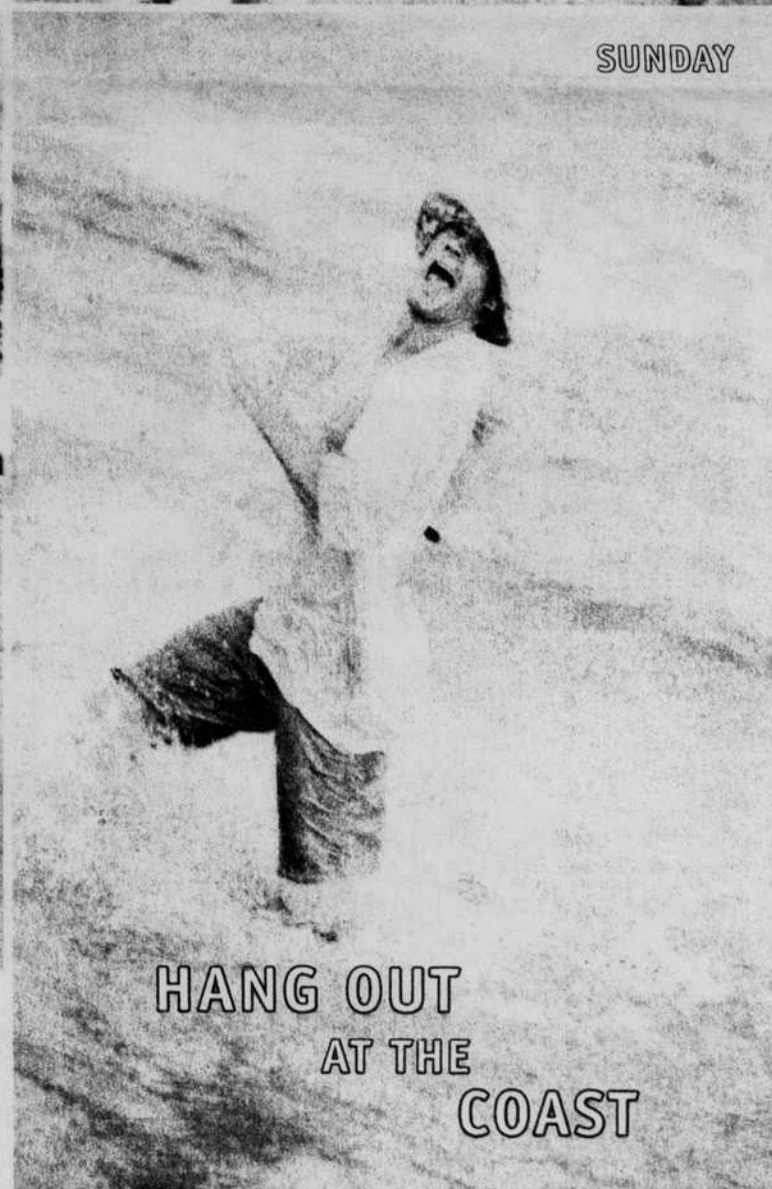
THURSDAY

MEET WITH STUDY GROUP



FRIDAY

GO OUT WITH FRIENDS



SUNDAY

HANG OUT AT THE COAST



SATURDAY

WAKE UP WITHOUT A HANGOVER

74% of UO students drink 1 or fewer days a week... or don't drink at all

Data taken from 1998 CORE Survey New View 2000 Office of Student Life