

Columbine Students Prepare to Return to School

By ANDREA ORR

LITTLETON, Colo. (Reuters) - Columbine High School students prepared Sunday to resume classes for the first time since last month's shocking massacre as police said their investigation of the shootings would likely lead to arrests.

Investigators were still not sure if Eric Harris, 18, and Dylan Klebold, 17, acted alone in planning the April 20 rampage in which they murdered 12 fellow students and a teacher before killing themselves. But a spokesman for the Jefferson County Sheriff said Sunday that some of the hundreds of leads they were following have been "panning out quite well."

He said it was "a very good bet" that at least one arrest would be made within the next two weeks.

"We're very close to it," he said, but declined to elaborate. Newspaper reports have said the person expected to be arrested was a man who allegedly provided a TEC-9 semi-automatic that was one of four weapons used by the teen-age gunmen.

So far Harris's parents have refused to let police question them, asking for immunity from prosecution. Klebold's parents were questioned by police for two hours on Friday and were described as very cooperative.

Meanwhile, mourners milled around their old campus, which has become the site of an elaborate memorial, while students rallied together

at a tearful Remembrance Ceremony on Sunday and tried to return some degree of normalcy to their lives.

One close friend of each of the 12 slain students and teacher William Sanders took the podium in the scenic Rocky Mountain theater and recalled moments they said they had once taken for granted.

The audience was occasionally brought to laughter hearing stories of one boy's gift of a glow-in-the-dark lizard, a girl's interminable boy talk and a teacher's polyester pants. But students also said they remained haunted by the tragedy and had trepidation about returning to school.

For the first time since the April 20 massacre, Columbine students will Monday resume classes at nearby Chatfield High School, which will hold morning and afternoon sessions to accommodate both sets of students.

"I know that things won't happen, but I just don't feel safe anymore," said Brain Anderson, a Columbine student who narrowly escaped injury. "Every so often, I still see Eric shooting a gun, and turning and shooting at me."

"Tomorrow students will be going back to school," said Jon DeStefano, the president of the Jefferson County Board of Education at the remembrance ceremony at the Red Rocks Amphitheater. "It's time to get back on the horse. This will take courage but I promise you that you will be safe and we will be there with you."

He said that every precaution had been taken to make Chatfield High as safe as possible, and that a task force would be put in place to improve security at all the schools in the county.

In preparation for the new students, Chatfield assigned several sheriffs deputies to the campus, changed all the locks on the building and blocked admission to anyone but students and staff with proper identification.

School officials said they did not know how well classes would be attended. "I think the expectation is that a lot of kids are going to welcome going back to some degree of normalcy," said a spokesman for the school board. "There may be some students who decide to stay out and I can't believe they would be penalized."

Among the thousands of mourners who continued to stream to the Columbine campus and bring flowers and hand-written messages to the memorial were many parents who said they hoped the tragedy would make an impression on their children.

"I brought my kids here to pay our respects and to show them what tragedy brings. Kids don't seem to take the time to understand," said Bud Fears. "If this doesn't wake up America, I don't know what will."

"I think (my children) have been a little more concerned about going to school and that's sad. I don't think kids should feel insecure going to school."

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A Calling for Child Gun Safety Locks Action to Keep Guns Away from Children

U.S. Rep. Julia Carson, D-Ind., today joined President Clinton in his call for child safety locks on guns and stronger action to keep guns away from children.

"Kids and guns are a deadly combination," Carson said. "It should not be easier for a child to operate a handgun than it is to open a bottle of aspirin. From Jonesboro to Springfield, from Paducah to Littleton, and all across America, the tragic consequences of mixing children and guns for those devices. The bill has 39 cosponsors.

Rep. Carson introduced the bill Feb. 3 in response the rising tide of gun violence among children in Indianapolis and nationwide.

Handgun manufactures have failed to honor their promise made more than a year ago at the White House to voluntarily supply safety devices with their products. According to a study by the Violence Policy Center, only 4 out of 20 handgun manufactures are supplying any kind of safety device. Worse, some devices provided are so shoddy that they don't work.

This legislation will:

- Require that all new handguns come with a safety lock or discharge prevention device;

- Require that minimum safety standards be developed for those devices to ensure the safety locks work, using the same standard-setting procedures used to develop safety standards for toys, bicycle helmets and child-resistant aspirin bottles;

- Authorize recall, repair, and/or replacement of substandard discharge protection devices;

- Require that handguns be accompanied by a warning that meets well established criteria for consumers warning labels, alerting buyers to the hazards that handguns pose to children and urging owners to store their weapons locked and unloaded;

- Preserve any stronger state law on safety locks and child access, as well as pending actions brought by victims of defective handgun or ineffective safety locks; and

- Ensure industry compliance through strong enforcement provisions, including public and private civil remedies and criminal penalties.

The Child Handgun Injury Prevention Act is the strongest handgun child safety lock bill ever offered in Congress, Rep. Carson said. It also relies on established product safety standard-setting procedures used by the Consumer Product Safety Commission.

The Congresswoman reiterated the President's assertion in his 1999 State of the Union Address that Congress should pass legislation to require trigger locks, and "do everything possible to keep our children safe."

The president announced his gun control proposals at a White House ceremony to launch his new omnibus crime package.

In addition to mandatory child-safety locks on all guns sold, Clinton

is proposing:

- Extension of an existing ban on juvenile possession of handguns to include semiautomatic assault rifles; also a ban on important fall ammunition magazines that hold more than 10 rounds, an extension of current law banning imports of those made since 1994.

- Background checks on buyers for all gun-show sales.

- A lifetime ban on gun ownership for people who commit violent crimes as juveniles.

- A three-day waiting period for all handgun purchases, with additional two days if law officers need them to complete their investigation. Until last year, the Brady Act provided five days for police to conduct background checks on buyers if they need that much time. Now, it limits them to three days, but most checks are instantaneous. Never before has there been a minimum, mandatory waiting period.

- Mandatory prison sentences of three to 10 years and \$10,000 fines for adults, including parents, who knowingly or recklessly allow children unlawful access to guns that are used to cause death or injury.

- Expansion of a federal program that traces firearms used by juveniles in crimes, which has helped identify several illegal gun markets.

The president also proposed requiring a background check for purchases of explosives, as well as guns, in their attack.

National Resource Center Helps Schools, Communities in Violence Prevention

PORTLAND, ORE., April 28 / PRNewswire/ — The National Resource Center for Safe Schools offers a range of help and services to schools and communities in the prevention of school violence. In the aftermath of the recent tragedy at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado, school safety has become a heightened and critical issue across the country.

The resource center maintains a Web site (www.nwrel.org/safe), giving a comprehensive overview of center programs and providing a wealth of resources on school safety, including free publications, a calendar of training and technical assistance events, a lending library with a searchable database, research, promising and effective practices, facts and figures, and useful links.

Trained staff are available to answer telephone queries on topics such as preventive education, safe school

plans, needs assessment, and school/community partnerships.

The center has a toll-free telephone number (800-547-6339, ext. 131) that is a central access point for requesting training and other technical assistance, or for obtaining more information about safe schools and violence prevention.

The National Resource Center for Safe Schools can assist schools and communities with:

- Recognizing early warning signs of potential violence such as social withdrawal, problems with anger, and direct or indirect threats to self and others

- Creating comprehensive plans to make a safe school environment

- Understanding the process of assessing individual school needs

- Determining what expert resources are available

- Creating a rational and reasoned crisis-response plan, including han-

dling the media, partnering with law enforcement agencies, effective crisis-communication plans, and identifying an appropriate crisis-response team. The crisis response plan is part of a comprehensive safe-school plan.

In addition to its toll-free number, the center can be contacted by e-mail at safeschools@nwrel.org or by mail at the following address: National Resource Center for Safe Schools, NWREL, 101 SW Main, Suite 500, Portland OR 97204.

The National Resource Center for Safe Schools is operated by the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (NWREL) in Portland, Oregon, through funding by the U. S. Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention and the United States Department of Education. NWREL is a nonprofit organization and the center's services are provided without cost to schools and communities.

N A A C P Tougher Laws Needed to Combat Hate Crimes

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (AP) — Stronger laws are needed to prosecute hate crimes, the head of the NAACP emphasized at a regional conference in Kansas City.

Kweisi Mfume discussed the murders of James Byrd Jr., a black man who was chained to a pickup truck and dragged for three miles in Jasper, Texas, and Matthew Shepard, a gay college student who was beaten and left tied to a fence in near-freez-

ing temperatures in Laramie, Wyo. He also talked about the high school shootings in Littleton, Colo.

All were instances of hate crimes, he said, and should be prosecuted as such. "And yet we recognize that the existing hate-crimes statutes were not enough," he said at a news conference Friday.

Mfume, 50, president of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, also noted recent examples of police brutality in Pittsburgh;

Riverside, Calif.; and New York City. "Those things all point to what we consider to be a growing, glaring national trend toward excessive use of force by police officers," Mfume said.

He said officers who use excessive force dishonor those who work well with communities. Mfume said police brutality is "an American problem" and that departments and municipalities should face repercussions from the federal government.

KTWB Television Stops Broadcasting Howard Stern Show

SEATTLE (AP) — KTWB Television has decided to pull "The Howard Stern Radio Show" off the air.

The move is in response to comments the shock-jock broadcast personality made about the shootings at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colo.

"Personally, I was shocked and offended by his remarks. Our sensitivities lie with our viewers and the families and friends of the victims," said Wade

Brewer, KTWB vice president and general manager.

The show had been broadcast late on Saturday night. Stern's daily, syndicated morning radio show is not broadcast in the Seattle market.

Stern's agent, Don Buchwald, did not immediately return a telephone message Friday night.

The Colorado Legislature condemned the statements by Stern, who

said some of the girls fleeing the April 20 shooting were "really good-looking" and wondered on the air whether the gunmen tried "to have sex with any of the good-looking girls."

KTWB is an affiliate of the Warner Brothers network, which is known for its shows targeted at teen-agers such as "Felicity," "Dawson's Creek" and "Buffy, the Vampire Slayer."

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