
VT shootings

Posted by KPW1956 - 2007/04/16 13:30

My son graduated from VT 2 years ago..and lived in the dorm involved in the first fatality his first 2 years. A second shooting took the lives of 20 or more others.. and many more injured.

I'm very thankful, that I have no children there currently and can only imagine the concern and fear that many parents are feeling today as they await word that their children are safe and accounted for. I know many who have children down there... (I'm in N.Va.) Please pray for those families who have been affected. This day is going down in history as the worst campus shooting episode in U.S. history.

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Re:VT shootings

Posted by Debby - 2007/04/16 14:28

I didn't know anything about it. I'll check out the details. My heart goes out to anyone who was hurt and their families.

Thanks for the info.

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Re:VT shootings

Posted by TigerRose - 2007/04/16 15:57

new count is 31 dead and 22 injured... several currently in surgery so the death toll can rise.

There are soooo many questions right now. With the bomb threats going on all week.... What security did they have? Just tragic So many young adults...

Now UT is under a bomb threat and a building was evacuated... Hoping it's a hoax and not a copy cat situation.

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Re:VT shootings

Posted by Debby - 2007/04/16 16:22

I just can't believe it. One of my best girlfriends who now lives in Texas has a son who attends there. He is graduating this spring and getting married this summer. I sent her an e-mail to make sure he's okay. I don't think I can rest until I know for sure he's okay. I know she must be out of her mind with worry.

I still can't figure out exactly what happened.

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Re:VT shootings

Posted by wish - 2007/04/16 16:36

Been watching it most of the day, it was a guy who had a grudge against one of the teachers i heard on channel 9 news.

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Re:VT shootings

Posted by KPW1956 - 2007/04/16 17:11

The count is now 33 dead... 31 including the gunman at Norris Hall and 2 dead at the first shooting in the arly a.m. at West AJ.. There is a press conference going on now.. They haven't confirmed that the 2 shooting incidents are connected...but they originally thought the first shooting was domestic in nature. I'm sure they'll be second guessing

themselves.. Many wonder why they waited 2 hours and after the second incident which was more like a massacre before they locked down the campus. That maybe it should have occurred after the first shooting.

They don't expect a list of the victims to be made public until tomorrow. I know many people there.. so I just pray that noone I know is affected..and of course my son knows many more people than I do! He was just down there about 10 days ago during Spring break taking some high school seniors to see the campus!

My younger daughter was accepted there but decided to attend her sisters university. Just being a parent of college aged kids and having connections to Tech... I know how some parents are feeling.. So many kids from this area attend there...that I don't think my area will escape this unscathed..

Re:VT shootings

Posted by Debby - 2007/04/16 17:35

I certainly hope none of the people you know were harmed at the school. There seems to be many questions about the manner the incident was handled.

I have heard the shooter was killed. You have to wonder what would make someone want to hurt all those people. In 1995, a UNC (Chapel Hill, NC) third year law student, opened fire with an assault rifle on a public street near campus, killing 2 people and injuring more. He had been under serious psychiatric care. He was found not guilty by reason of insanity.

I think there was an argument made that the psychiatrist failed to properly treat the patient and that he should have recognized how dangerous he was and had him committed. It really causes you to think how vulnerable we all are.

Re:VT shootings

Posted by grizzlys4 - 2007/04/16 23:39

OMG.....

Sooooooooo incredibly sad!!! I'm so sorry.....prayers going out major time!!!

I know colleges and universities don't have the safety procedures that our elementary, middle and high schools do. Don't know why.....I sure hope this opens up some dialog about this!!

Keep us posted with new info if you get any!!

Re:VT shootings

Posted by Debby - 2007/04/17 10:33

I am quite worried now. I have not heard anything from my dear friend. I sent an e-mail yesterday to make sure her son was okay. We just exchanged e-mails last week and she usually responds back quickly. I just hope she is out of town or she is busy with so many people contacting her to check on her son. If I haven't heard from her by noon, I'm going to try to call her.

I heard what I think was a local ATF (Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms) officer on our local radio this morning. He didn't say how he knew these things but was reporting some details I had not heard on the main news.

He said the gunman had a cell phone with him and had attempted or actually made phone calls before or during the shootings. He refused to say who he was calling. He said that the shooter had plenty of ammunition left when he killed himself. He said that the type of weapons he used are more for wounding than killing and you have to shoot someone multiple times at close range to kill them, which is what the gunman did.

Has anyone else heard this anywhere else. The officer was saying things like I'm telling you what I can but not so much as to get me in trouble. I'm not sure if he was legit or not.

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Re:VT shootings

Posted by KPW1956 - 2007/04/17 13:42

Just a brief update...

My son has 4 housemates, all of whom are VT alumni.. One roommate does know a number of people affected. They still have many names that need to be released. So far I've seen several from the Northern Va. area including the gunmen.

My daughter who attends another university here in Va. did let me know today that a high school classmate of hers from our community was wounded in the hand.. If that is the closest the tragedy hits our family, I will be considering ourselves blessed.

Several of the students that I do know, they are children of fellow members of our church.. So I think if there was an immediate concern for them...I would have heard by now.

I will be VT praying that Debbie's friend's child is ok!

Some of the stories coming out today are heart wrenching..

The convocation is scheduled to begin within the hour.. I think it might be televised. Tonight there is a candlelight vigil scheduled to be held on the drill field.. They expect 40,000 people, students, alumni and faculty. I'm sure the 11:00 news will be highlighting both events.

The school is in the process of beginning the healing process!
Thanks for your continued prayers!

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Re:VT shootings

Posted by Debby - 2007/04/17 14:12

I just got word from my friend that her son attends James Madison University, not VA Tech. I am so relieved. Of course she is concerned with her son being so far away and on any campus right now.

I made myself come to work today. I just wanted to sit and cry.

I went by a local coffee hangout to get coffee this morning and everyone was sitting silent and sad. Many were staring into their computers as if in disbelief. Nobody in the shop said a word except for the man taking my order. It was unreal.

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Re:VT shootings

Posted by KPW1956 - 2007/04/17 14:45

I'm very touched by the many forms of support the school's community and victims families are receiving.

I hope that the deaths of those 30 some odd deaths will not have been in vain... Even the gunman's family needs compassion right now..

If every other campus in this country contemplated a similar scenario befalling them and how they might handle it.. then it will at least be an opportunity to have learned from VT's story.

If nothing else, I think we are all smacked with the sense of the brevity of life... and how quickly circumstances can change..

Re:VT shootings

Posted by TigerRose - 2007/04/18 20:11

The murderer had compiled a video and sent it to NBC News. It's available on MSNBC News... but this is what the man was doing during those 2 hours..... I have not seen it yet.

Just an angry young man.

Also there was a Columbine survivor that attends VT (thankfully she didn't have to witness this one, just the aftermath).. maybe she can be an added strength to the healing for these students since she's been through it and recovered.

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Re:VT shootings

Posted by Debby - 2007/04/19 18:31

The more that comes out about this gunman, the more I grow alarmed. I don't think things look well for the university. With so many factors adding up, there is no doubt going to be legal action.

I saw an man on tv today who said he was not allowing his daughter to go back to school. He said the more he learned about what the school knew and that they allowed the boy to stay in the school, the more he believes the school does not have any plan or mechanism to protect the innocent student. He said he has no way of knowing if there are more students like the gunman, that the university knows about, but, allows them to continue to attend classes.

When I was in law school, one of my classmates that I knew quite well because we had actually attended undergraduate together as well, snapped. He had been very depressed for most of the year. Finally he took the fire extinguisher in the dorm hallway and broke out windows with it. He also sprayed the extinguisher all over the dorm hallway and wrote with spray paint on the walls of his dorm room, crazy things like..Death to the Dean, The faculty can go to Hell, etc. It was mostly directed to the faculty of the school.

He also lit a fire in the middle of the hall in a trash can. He said he couldn't make the voices stop.

The police and the fire department came. They took him to the mental hospital and he was admitted. He was never allowed to come back to the law school. I felt sorry for him. He was mentally ill, no doubt. But I would sit in class and wonder if he might come back to get even. We thought about it a lot.

Near graduation we had skit night where the students make fun of their years in law school including classmates and faculty and celebrate our years together. A group did a skit about us graduating and this student showing up with a machine gun, screaming at the dean and shooting the graduates. I was horrified and refused to participate. When we graduated a couple of weeks later, I couldn't stop thinking about it really happening.

I know that all of my classmates look back upon what happened in our school and relate to what happened at VA Tech. We were so lucky nothing happened to us.

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Re:VT shootings

Posted by TigerRose - 2007/04/20 07:18

I think the school is between a rock and a hard place when it comes to students like Cho. There is not one single person that is able to take all the puzzle pieces and put them together and make a diagnosis. ALSO it's not legal for administration to make an assessment of a student's mental health.

They were alerted by a couple incidences that raised red flags campus wide and his writings that was a red flag to a department. As far as the stalking of the females... he seemed to have backed off each time he was talked to about it. They even sent him for evaluation in which he was released with the diagnosis of depression- not homicidal. He had not broken any laws other than harassment and since he backed down and the females did not press charges.... What law did he break up until now except for "social laws"?

I remember when colleges across the nation was under fire because of a 0-tolerance attitude when it came to depression. They started the practice of evicting anyone who tried to commit suicide or even sought help for suicidal thoughts. Matter of fact VA was the first state to pass a law that barred colleges from punishing a student for depression / suicidal thoughts. On top of that the school may be held liable if they tried to help the student and the student commits

suicide anyways. (You will see the college be sued very soon for allowing him to stay there in the first place- which by law they weren't allowed to kick him out -if I understand the law right)

According to American College Health Association's National College Health Assessment from spring 2006, found that out of nearly 95,000 students on 117 campuses:
Nearly half of all the students had "felt so depressed it was difficult to function." at least once
16 percent of the students reported they felt that way on at least five occasions
Nearly two-thirds had felt that things were hopeless at least once.
More than 9 percent had seriously considered suicide, and
one in every 100 had attempted suicide in the previous year.

So what is to be done and in such a way that isn't going to cause further problems with students learning to cope with college/ life/ new set of wings and being able to legally and successfully help a student? Who do you raise the red flags to if the administration's hands are tied? Also what if the student is just odd, unique but not a danger to himself- how can you be sure that you aren't going to ruin the future if you react to someone just being weird or eccentric or without making a student feel that it's unacceptable to be outside the norm? Further more who would be willing to place themselves in-between a rock and a hard place when it comes to liability one way or another?

I don't know myself... maybe if there was a central person on each campus, a psychologist. One that a dean can alert them to when a student raises a red flags and able to keep a file.. one not attached to permanent school records but one when they can collect the data, assess it and be able to recommend further mental evaluation at a mental hospital and then they have the papers, a history to show the odd behavior to the evaluation team and let the hospital make the full assessment.

Post edited by: TigerRose, at: 2007/04/20 08:02

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Re:VT shootings

Posted by TigerRose - 2007/04/20 08:19

Something else that I've thought about with this...

In December 2005 a magistrate found that Cho presented "an imminent danger to self or others as a result of mental illness, or is so seriously mentally ill as to be substantially unable to care for self and is incapable of volunteering or unwilling to volunteer for treatment." when he was held for evaluation.

It then appears that he was referred to outpatient help and diagnosed with depression and not kept in... where it was safe for him and others. Why was the ball dropped here?

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Re:VT shootings

Posted by KPW1956 - 2007/04/20 08:44

There is also a problem in my state (Va!) that you cannot force a person to get help.. They have to prove they are a danger to themselves or others first.

I speak from experience because I have an older sister who I would consider to be schizophrenic... (sp?) She has had a history of stalking type behavior, talking to herself, verbal threats... harrassment.. She did marry several years ago but that marriage didn't last. (He had issues too but not as severe)... He even tried to get help for her and call mental health professionals. Unfortunately they didn't have insurance.. He tried to talk to them and I even spoke with a couple of the social workers... I was concerned because I know she had had a shotgun that was a gift many years ago from a boyfriend who worked in a gunshop. They verified with me that she did have a gun.. But I don't think they did anything with the information. So even her husband could not seek help for her against her will. The only time social services did step in with her... was when she had a massive infection on her leg and they forced her to go to the hospital.. That happened twice.

I think many of us have known various people who were eccentric... and had a few screws loose. I don't think there was any indication that Cho had any history of weapons issues or direct threats.. I saw one news show yesterday where they were discussing the fact that possibly the college didn't put him out for fear of being sued. There hadn't been any incidents in the year prior to this.. and the only reason he got some semblance of help then was that he threatened to

commit suicide..and he roommates told the cops what he had said. It was only decided that he was a danger to himself. Even if someone gets medication, you can't make them take it... You can't even make someone get followup..

Maybe they could have put him on probation. Even if they had put him out, whose to say he might not have retaliated in much the same way?

I'd be interested in seeing what his transcripts say.. How did he make it to his senior year? Maybe his parents wouldn't let him drop out of school and the impending pressure of graduating and the open question of what next? I know 2 years ago, my son was actually depressed about graduating.. He loved college... and the thought of moving on without his good buddies was very hard. I heard this isn't that uncommon to feel that way. All is well...and he lives with 4 VT alumni! I have no clue what the final straw was... but it didn't appear to be anyone of the victims...

How many times have we seen someone snap in the workplace or at a mall? Seems like every week there is an incident somewhere?

I think there is alot more mental illness out there then we are aware of.

I wonder if they've considered that 2 of the 32 victims were also from the same high school as the shooter. Not the same graduating classes though..although Erin Peterson might have been close.. Reema Samaha was a freshman I think and at least a couple years younger. (Westfield high school is near my church and about 8 miles from me. Know lots of kids who went there and who currently attend there.) They are saying he was picked on in high school.. (so was my sister because of her odd behavior) maybe he had done his homework to find some highschool alumni... I still think the first shooting might have been to create a diversion so that he could carry out the 2nd shooting. He deliberately probably laid low so that he could figure out if the campus would be shut down. Campus police would have been tied up with the first incident..

Of course everyone will second guess themselves.. But I think the college did what they could with the info they had at the time. Both the day of the shooting and the prior incidents involving Cho. Hindsight is always 20/20...

I wonder what if any involvement might a student advisor who might have had contact with him over his 4 years there? I think they are student advisors? Faculty members? Not sure of the lingo... Wouldn't they see the bigger picture and the series of red flags? It didn't sound like any roommates ever felt threatened or complained..

It's really sad.... Today was designated a day of mourning in our state. Although the whole week has been one of mourning and the weeks to come will be as well...

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Re:VT shootings

Posted by KPW1956 - 2007/04/20 09:11

TigerRose wrote:

Something else that I've thought about with this...

In December 2005 a magistrate found that Cho presented "an imminent danger to self or others as a result of mental illness, or is so seriously mentally ill as to be substantially unable to care for self and is incapable of volunteering or unwilling to volunteer for treatment." when he was held for evaluation.

It then appears that he was referred to outpatient help and diagnosed with depression and not kept in... where it was safe for him and others. Why was the ball dropped here?

TR, I think the media has kept getting this part screwed up... Some have been saying 'to himself' others are saying 'to others'.. I saw one station highlight the document and it said 'to himself'... and that nothing toward 'others' was mentioned at least in that document.

One talk show yesterday they were saying that he was a psycho path and knew what he was doing. He could probably have faked his way to making them think he was better so they'd release him. Not saying that is so? This was an outside health facility and not the campuses.. His records were probably confidential and the university wouldn't have had access to that.. It was their determination though (the outside mental health facility).. I heard that they recommended outpatient care and follow up? That wouldn't have been the university's responsibility to make him go.. Not that they even had knowledge of it at that point. Should the health facility been on it rather than the university? Should they or did they collaborate some form of an effort? Needless to say, this may become standard after they dissect this whole mess...for future situations.

I'm happy that an independant panel has been appointed to figure out what happened, response issues and what recommendations could be made to prevent a recurrence or to help kids who might be similarly a problem.

Post edited by: KPW1956, at: 2007/04/20 09:14

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Re:VT shootings

Posted by TigerRose - 2007/04/20 10:26

Nods, my sister is one that can walk in and fake some mental illness and then overcome it. All for attention. She's good.... for awhile til she bores of it. She also can play quite sane when she wants something. It took many years for her to be deemed a Sociopath and schizo. She still can charm them though.

I guess I came from a state that if you were deemed a danger to self and / or others... that the mental health facility is to keep you for a longer evaluation. Also if a parent or spouse went to court or Adult Protective Services with the evaluation of harming self and/ or others that they can put you into an in-patient status. That is what I meant as dropping the ball. If VA doesn't allow spouses and/ or parents to place a potentially harmful person into some in-depth help then it's the state that dropped the ball IMO.

I do believe to school did what it could and thought it was best. It seems like it was a puzzle and there was no centralized information on the student. I know you can't make the student go to couseling but if those writings were so disturbing, he was known to be depressed and withdrawn, and made everyone uncomfortable around him... then these issues should be compiled somewhere. Psychologist only know what they are given and sometimes that isn't much to go on. Did they hand over the writings to them as part of the evaluation or only went off just the possible suicidal thoughts? What would have happened if the writings and other things were presented to the examiner? (I do realize that the papers may have come after the examination) but still.... it seems that it these mass killers have several red flags raised but never in the same place... esp in schools. Or teachers would talk amongst themselves but with no one who truely had the power to examine the issues and had the power to decide if futher examination is warrented.

I think less attention should be payed on his manifesto and such and more attention should be payed on how he got to that point and what can we do to flag these people and possibly stopping another mass killing. I am worried that that some students are going to be tagged in an over-zealous reaction that would make being odd a crime or potential nutcase.

It may be that we will never be able to stop some of the murderers because of the risk of being over-zealous to individuals, a sociopath ability to act normal, and the freedom of privacy we Americans demand.

I don't know.

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Re:VT shootings

Posted by Debby - 2007/04/20 14:27

If there is indeed a law or policy that the the university felt prohibited them from terminating him as a student, I bet the administration is now rethinking their decision. I would rather be the subject of a legal action that I improperly terminated a student than what they have facing them now.

You try to do the best you can. Perhaps more could have been done, but, what? I think it would have been a good idea to have consulted with the university's attorney and even the school's liability insurance carrier's attorney, in order to survey what their options were and to take measures to do whatever necessary to make sure the campus was safe.

Foreseeability is a legal issue. Is it foreseeable that a mentally ill person who stalks students, frightens staff and students, threatens violence against himself, isolates himself from all others, and writes detailed and distubing stories of murder would be likely to actually harm a student on the campus? That might be for a jury to decide.

Since VA Tech is a state (commonwealth) school, they may have some sovereign immunity, meaning they can't be sued, but, there are exceptions when they have insurance, so that can probably be gotten around.

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Re:VT shootings

Posted by wish - 2007/04/20 16:48

The school did not protect the students and because of it they are the reason so many people lost their lives.

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Re:VT shootings

Posted by TigerRose - 2007/04/20 17:14

There's more than just that senerio that could have played out. It may not have been where they kicked him out and life on campus goes on like nothing will ever happen.. or they kick him out and he comes back in... with the feeling that the university has just reinforced his deep dark feelings of being rejected and picked on, fueling his anger and depression and he comes back and shoots down students and teachers. Since it's an open campus... he would be able to get into any building easily...

We can second guess to the end of time. With his type of illness... any scenerio can end up in horrible way with someone sueing the school. The best way would have been to hospitalize him for how ever long it was needed a few years ago... when he was evaluated. Simply being a threat to himself and /or others.

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Re:VT shootings

Posted by KPW1956 - 2007/04/20 17:25

T/R,

That's exactly what I think! I think he would have found an opportunity regardless of what they did. It's funny I was talking to somebody today about that...

I still have yet to hear of a particular incident recently that might have triggered him and sent him over the edge. It sounds though he has spent weeks and months plotting this and that even his suite mates didn't really notice anything too out of the ordinary. He had a dark mood and was generally anti social.

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Re:VT shootings

Posted by mazzy - 2007/04/21 15:48

The VT shootings were an awful tragedy that no family should have to experience.

In our society the law seems to bend over for the rights of the criminal or in this case the mentaly ill.

I believe tougher gun control may be our only solution. My wish is that all guns be outlawed... period... end of discussion. Ooops there goes an amendment I'd love to see gone from our Constitution.

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Re:VT shootings

Posted by TigerRose - 2007/04/21 18:27

mazzy wrote:

..... My wish is that all guns be outlawed... period... end of discussion. Ooops there goes an amendment I'd love to see gone from our Constitution.

Too many hunters and sports shooters (there are Olympic events) depend on guns. There are some area here in the US that still hunt for food. Not all the areas of the US have all the conviences and groceries and butchers etc etc nearby. Granted a huge % of the US lives as close to cities as possible but not all. There are areas around here that still live an

hour or more from Wal-mart. But I do agree that tighter regulation on non-sporting or hunting guns is needed but not the golden answer.

Unfortunately in areas that have totally banned guns... other methods are used. When someone wants to destroy... they WILL find a way- not being able to find a gun won't hinder them at all. (Look at the Tylenol poisoning that went on many many years ago). Also serial killers usually don't use guns.

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