

Students from Ohio School Shooting Share Experiences

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In a cafeteria full of chattering high school students and their echoing voices, a loud pop goes off, and majority of the students fail to take notice, because it only sounds as if someone blew into a brown paper lunch bag and crushed it. Not too long after, a second pop goes off, and by the third pop a student is down, and a woman runs around the room and yells, "Get down, he has a gun!" Everyone hastens to find a spot under the tables, vending machines, and classrooms within the room. They all pray they're not the next victim of the shiny but lethal .22 caliber gun.

Sofia Larkins, a freshman at Chardon High School in Ohio who witnessed a shooting at her school, shares her story.

"I hid underneath the table behind me, putting me about 30 feet away from him because he started walking closer. I saw him next to teacher hall's desk, who was not in the room yet, and I saw his gun. It was shiny and silver. He looked down at my area. I could not tell if he was looking me in the eyes, or if he was looking at me at all, or if he was looking to the right or left of me. T.J. walked towards my area, and I got up with a whole bunch of others and we ran into the teachers' lounge. I hid in between two Pepsi machines with my friend, and someone locked the door and another pushed a piano in front of it," Larkins recalled during a Facebook chat session.



As reported by [The New York Times](#), Lake Academy sophomore, **Thomas (T.J.) Lane**, shot five of his former school mates in the morning of Monday, Feb. 27 at Chardon High School. Three of the students, sophomore Daniel Parmerton, junior Russel King Jr., and junior Demetrius Hewlin, died. Though the penalty has yet to be determined, Lane has been charged with three counts of aggravated murder, two counts of attempted aggravated murder, and one count of felonious assault.

Brittany Kniffee, a freshman and a friend of the victims, was in the building during the shooting. She described her experience a few days after the incident.

"The lock down was intense. Everyone thought it was just a drill, then we heard girls from an upstairs room screaming, 'Someone got shot!' Then a man screams, 'Everyone get out!' Finally there was a large amount of crashing noises, and we saw kids running out the door in panic. Texts started pouring in from people who were in the cafeteria. We all knew it was real then. Everyone in my class was scared and wondered who the victims were. They were all hoping it wasn't our closest friends. Parents were calling, screaming and crying. They were wondering if their children were okay. It was the most heart-wrenching, terrible event I've ever been through," Kniffee said during a Facebook chat session.

School was canceled for the rest of the week. When it resumed, places from all over the world made donations and sent gifts. They have received money, banners, and 4,000 tickets to a Cleveland Cavaliers game. Unfortunately, the students of Chardon High School fail to go back to their regular school rituals, Kniffee says.

"[The day of the shooting] is plastered all over the walls. Everything and everyone is different. We're all walking around like there's something missing, which there is. We are acting like any school would if they had to watch three of their classmates be put into the ground. Tears poured from the eyes of every person in the building," Kniffee said.

A news story in the [Huffington Post](#) states that Lane's records show that he has a criminal history. In 2009 he was charged with disorderly conduct. In addition, his father was once charged with felony, assault, and kidnapping. Despite these allegations, T.J.'s peers continue to spread good word of him through the media. He's often described as shy but very kind.

"T.J. was a very nice kid, I'm not sure what was going through his mind, he's very smart," says Larkins.

According to the [Chardon High School website](#), "As the Chardon community heals, our ongoing priority is to provide the appropriate resources for our students, staff and families to deal with this horrific tragedy." Their updated school

calendar included several days in which students, teachers, and family members could meet with their school's trauma counselors.

"Generally when there is a crisis like the death of a student or teacher, a team of the district's student services for a crisis plan consisting of teachers, counselors, psychologists, and administration come together to discuss the plan for certain conditions. We try to include teachers, parents, and the rest of the community in accordance to the micro and macro view of the incident. There is a Supreme Court law that states that we as teachers are the students' parents once they walk into this school. During the past crises, we have coordinated moments of silence and times to meet and have talks with students in the drop in center," says trained crisis and guidance counselor at Niles West, **Hope Kracht**.

Dr. Jason Ness, coordinator for crisis plans and assistant principal of student services, says, "The lock-down drills we have done are in anticipation for dangerous situations. Our crisis team develops many and different plans with students and the community for the healing process and for the underlying reason of the situation. The shootings from [places like] Ohio and Columbine usually have common themes. Whether it's bullying or undiagnosed depression, it is our duty to recognize what triggers the problem in terms of reaching out to the students. It is important that we help students who have problems through very comprehensive procedures."

Kracht said it is important that Niles West faculty, staff, and students visit the counselors or social workers if they have concerns relating to potential harms.

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