Learning from Newtown

Mary Schoenfeldt, Public Education Coordinator
Everett Office of Emergency Management
March 7, 2013
Learning From Newtown
Newtown Connecticut
Layers of Impact

Emergency Management
City Departments
School System
Communication
Community

Everett Office of Emergency Management
Mary Schoenfeldt
Who are they?
Sandy Hook...Now You See It...
Now You Don’t...
Overview

• 26 people killed in a small community
• Everyone knew someone
• Media and visitors shuts down the town. Gridlock
• President comes to visit... so does Anderson Cooper and Dr. Phil
• 21 Funerals in town in about a week
• Massive law enforcement effort
• Multiple Federal agencies respond
• Businesses impacted
• Volunteers... some invited ... some not
• $7.5 Million donated to families within 4 weeks
• 60,000 Teddy Bears
• Cascading Events... School leadership a victim, snow, flu, conspiracy theory
60,000 Teddy Bears!!!!
A Few of the Challenges for the town

• Donations
• Volunteers
• Memorials
• Gridlock
• Economics
• City Government
• Large Event Management
• Staffing
• Aftermath
• Resuming Regular Business Operations
Memorials... Intentional, Unintentional
Donations Management... VOAD Adventist Disaster Services
On Friday, December 14, Sandy Hook Elementary School students and faculty put into practice safety precautions administrators never hoped to use: the evacuation of the building in an emergency. These students, accompanied by a pair of state troopers and another pair of school employees, were among the first to safely move to Sandy Hook Fire’s main station after Sandy Hook resident Adam Lanza had entered their school and shot 26 people inside the building, 20 of whom died. — Bee Photo, Hicks

EDITORIAL INK DROPS

Answering For Our Town

The holiday season had already settled over Newtown like a snow globe, and the spirit of the season had reached Sandy Hook, glittered with lights and bubbled with good cheer. Then on Friday morning a young man filled with anger and treachery, armed beyond reason, took deadly aim at Sandy Hook’s true heart — its elementary school. The violence wrought in the next several minutes left 26 dead, mostly 6 and 7 year-olds and several of the adults who tried to protect them. The scale and the horror of the crime still outpace our capacity to understand it. We expect it always will.

The shootings at Sandy Hook Elementary School shocked and shattered the soul of Manheim’s, Newtown’s, suburban tradition.

28 People Dead —

Town Grieves Following Mass Murder At Sandy Hook Elementary School

By Andrew Clemenza

The Newtowon Bee...
On Friday, December 14, Sandy Hook Elementary School students and faculty put into practice safety precautions administrators never hoped to use: the evacuation of the building in an emergency. These students, accompanied by a pair of state troopers and another pair of school employees, were among the first to safely move to Sandy Hook Fire's main station after Sandy Hook resident Adam Lanza had entered their school and shot 26 people inside the building, 20 of whom died. — Bee Photo, Hicks

School Safety Procedures Saves The Lives of 476 Students
School Issues- Shooting at a school, not a school shooting

- Emergency Management Coordination
- Key Leaders Victims
- Plans in place... worked well for the most part
- Rebuild? Tear it down?
- Relocate and Reopen New Sandy Hook Elementary
- Costs
- Personnel Decisions
  - Superintendent
  - Sandy Hook Principal
- Neighboring schools in lock down
- Non Traditional Support Methods... Comfort Dogs, horses and pigs
- Trigger Events for Kids – scraping chairs
- Staff – Parking Lot Phone Call Support

**TYPICAL Reactions:** Scapegoat, Staff turn over, Test Scores, Vocabulary... 12-14, Anniversaries
Victims Families

– Circle of Support

– Looming issues
January 2, 2013

Dear Parents,

As we return to school many questions are being raised about the mental health supports that are being made available to Sandy Hook students, parents and staff. The School Department has been working closely with the State Departments of Education (SDE), Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS), and the Department of Children and Families (DCF) to determine the best way to address the mental health needs of our school community. We have consulted national experts who unfortunately have been involved in similar tragedies around the country. They have advised us that we need an immediate plan that focuses on assisting students and staff to return to school and a longer range plan that evaluates the traumatic impacts and offers trauma specific treatment to address those individuals that have lasting impacts from this tragedy.

The school will use a team of mental health professionals comprised of staff from the DMHAS and DCF and private providers they work with. The mental health teams will provide a short-term response, most likely from two to four weeks that is directed at supporting our return to an educational mission. These staff are part of a statewide network developed to rapidly respond to disasters and have been trained in Psychological First Aid, an intervention developed by the National Child Traumatic Stress Network and the National Center for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. These organizations have tailored this approach to include a manual for its use in schools. The intervention offers practical advice, stabilization techniques, information about coping strategies and linkage to other support services if needed. While the approach is therapeutic and has been found to support recovery it is not therapy.

A primary goal of this intervention is to promote recovery and relieve distress by re-
Media/Communications Issues

• MSN Story giving address of school “send a sympathy card”

• MSN Story asking for ‘Volunteers, especially Grief Counselors, please call...”

• Newtown Bee provided Media Training to impacted First Responders

• Connecticut Association of Funeral Directors... 18 volunteer Funeral Directors to help and a Media Consultant
Police Pact Revised To Address 'Emotional Impact' Pay Issues
The town and the Newtown Police Union have reached an agreement that formally addresses pay provisions for police officers who take time off work due to "emotional issues" stemming from the 12/14 shooting incident at Sandy Hook Elementary School. Read More
Taft HS – OVERVIEW

- School Shooting – 9 am
- Drill that morning before the shooting
- Neighbor saw student with a gun... called 911
- Two staff talked him into putting gun down.
- Police took over Parent Notification. Released kids alphabetically. Parents not all notified for 6 hours.
- Joint IC At the School... PD took the lead
Lessons

• Newtown
  
  – Typos in Written Statements
  
  – JIC/JIS should be set up
  
  – Hire Public Relations firm to handle press conferences
  
  – Provide Demographic sheet on school or impacted system
  
  – Connecticut State Police assigned each family one officer to act as liaison to others
  
  – Police Chief is now a “celebrity”
  
  – Assistant Superintendent brought in for day to day work

• Taft
  
  – No official message from school district for 1 week
  
  – No serious injuries… attention goes away
  
  – KCSOS pulled Student Support Services training records for involved staff
  
  – Multiple threats since then… most on Facebook. 10 lockdowns in two weeks
  
  – Provided Digital Citizenship classroom training to try to get kids to not repost rumors

Everett Office of Emergency Management
Mary Schoenfeldt
Newtown Connecticut... We Can Learn From Them

• Mary Schoenfeldt

• Everett Office of Emergency Management

• 425-257-7965

• mschoenfeldt@ci.everett.wa.us