

TIMES RECORD

TODAY IN LIVING

KIDS LEND HAND AT FOOD BANK PAGE 1B



TODAY IN NATION & WORLD

As REBELS CLOSE IN, SYRIAN LEADER HAS CARDS LEFT

PAGE 6A

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A Stephens Media LLC Newspaper Serving Fort Smith, Western Arkansas and Eastern Oklahoma

DEADLY RAMPAGE

Gunman Kills 26 At School

20 CHILDREN AMONG CASUALTIES

By John Christoffersen
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

NEWTOWN, Conn. — A man killed his mother at their home and then opened fire Friday inside an elementary school, massacring 26 people, including 20 children, as youngsters covered in fear to the sound of gunshots reverberating through the building and screams echoing over the intercom.

The 20-year-old killer, carrying at least two handguns, committed suicide at the school, bringing the death toll to 28, authorities said.

The rampage, coming less than two weeks before Christmas, was the nation's second-deadliest school shooting, exceeded only by the Virginia Tech massacre that claimed 33 lives in 2007.

"Our hearts are broken today," a tearful President Barack Obama, struggling to maintain his composure, said at the White House. He called for "meaningful action" to prevent such shootings, saying, "As a country, we have been through this too many times."



President Barack Obama wipes his eye as he speaks about the elementary school shooting in Newtown, Conn., on Friday in the briefing room of the White House in Washington.

Police shed no light on the motive for the attack. The gunman, Adam Lanza, was believed to suffer from a personality disorder and lived with his mother, said a law enforcement official who was briefed on the investigation but was not authorized to discuss it.

Panicked parents looking for their children raced to Sandy Hook Elementary in Newtown, a prosperous New England community of about 27,000 people 60 miles northeast of New York City. Police told youngsters at the kindergarten-through-fourth-grade school to close their eyes as they were led from

the building so that they wouldn't see the blood and broken glass.

Schoolchildren — some crying, others looking frightened — were escorted through a parking lot in a line, hands on each other's shoulders.

Law enforcement officials speaking on condition of anonymity said that Lanza killed his mother, Nancy Lanza, then drove to the school in her car with at least three guns, including a high-powered rifle that he apparently left in the back of the vehicle, and shot up two classrooms around 9:30 a.m.

SEE SHOOTING PAGE 8A



People leave the Sandy Hook Volunteer Fire Station in tears Friday after a shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Conn. The firehouse was being used as a staging area after the shooting.

School District Aces Audit

By Chad Hunter
TIMES RECORD • CHUNTER@SWTIMES.COM

The Fort Smith School District received the highest marks in an audit for the fiscal year ending June 30.

Performed by an independent company, Fort Smith based accounting firm Przybysz & Associates, the audit, presented this week, offered the best possible opinion.

"It's a very healthy, good, overall score," said Marc Lux of Przybysz & Associates.

The audit indicates the district's net assets of \$103.7 million was an increase of \$2.2 million over the previous year. Total revenues decreased by \$2.9 million, while total expenses decreased by \$1.5 million.

"The financial standing of Fort Smith Public Schools and the independent auditors' assessment of our operations continues to be positive," Superintendent Benny Gooden wrote in a letter to the Fort Smith School Board. "The importance of day-to-day care in managing the complex financial operations of the Fort Smith public schools cannot be overstated."

Lux said the district's normal day-to-day operating costs remained on par with prior years.

"The bottom line is that expenses are very consistent from one year to the next, \$137 million compared to \$136 million," he said.

Of the school district's available long-term debt of \$370 million, \$62 million, or 17 percent, is currently being used.

SEE AUDIT PAGE 8A



Southside High School students Grace Ann Rothwell, 16, left, and Kriston Dorsey, 17, wrap Christmas presents Tuesday at Central Mall in Fort Smith. Arkansas Valley Habitat for Humanity will offer gift wrapping until Dec. 24 in exchange for donations.

Help Build Homes With Donations To Gift Wrappers

By Stacy Ryburn
TIMES RECORD • SRYBURN@SWTIMES.COM

Christmas shopping can be made a little easier at Central Mall in Fort Smith this year thanks to the gift-wrapping services provided by Arkansas Valley Habitat for Humanity.

The charity will wrap gifts, for a donation, until 5:15 p.m. Dec. 24, director of development Debbie Everly said. Volunteers are manning a station in front of J.C. Penney at the mall. The funds raised will be used to buy material to build houses in western Arkansas.

"It's a great way for Habitat to make money, and when people are busy during the holidays they don't have to wrap presents," volunteer JoAnn Gedosh said. "It's a win-win for everybody."

This is the third year the

charity has offered gift wrapping at the mall, Everly said. Each year, the charity wraps about 2,000 gifts, with more and more each year.

Prices range from \$3 to \$10, depending on the size of the gift, Everly said. Last year, the program raised about \$10,000.

"It's good because if they're still shopping, they can drop their gifts off, and we'll wrap them by the time they come back," volunteer Dana Deason said.

The mantra of the volunteers is customer service, Everly said. For anyone who might have difficulty carrying the presents, the volunteers will offer to go out to a customer's parked vehicle, bring the gifts in, wrap them and then take them back to the vehicle, Everly said.

SEE WRAPPERS PAGE 8A

'Rain, Snow, Shine,' Women Help Give Out Sack Lunches

By Kim Murdock
SPECIAL TO THE TIMES RECORD

When a man was freezing, one volunteer at The Sack Lunch Program took off her coat and gave it to him without asking questions, volunteer Ava Williams said, and "I have seen him again in that jacket."

Williams "would go down Sixth Street" when she worked near The Sack Lunch Program, and she had seen people standing outside and wondered what was happening there.

After she retired, she read in the newspaper about the Next Step Day Room, which is on the top floor of the Secret Building of St. John's Episcopal Church on the corner of North B and Sixth Streets.

The Sack Lunch Program operates from the bottom floor.

Both programs help those in need. She and a friend volunteered at the Day Room initially, and Williams now volunteers at The Sack Lunch Program. Sack lunches are served Monday through Friday, 8:30-9 a.m. and Monday through Saturday, 11:30 a.m. to noon. The Sack Lunch Program is the recipient of this year's Times Record Community Christmas Card.

"The pay is great, you know," Williams said of her volunteer work. She described the reward and



Auniece Campbell, left, and Ava Williams with Greater Pilgrim Rest Baptist Church count and store sack lunches before opening the morning doors at The Sack Lunch Program on Nov. 26.

COMMUNITY CHRISTMAS CARD

How To Donate

- To sign the Community Christmas Card, you may:
 - Send your names and at least \$2 per name to Times Record Christmas Card, P.O. Box 272, Fort Smith, AR 72902. All names should be received by Thursday to be included in the Christmas Eve edition.
 - Bring your names and cash, check, debit or credit card to the cashier on the first floor of the Times Record building at 3600 Wheeler Ave.
 - Call 784-0464 to pay by debit or credit card.
 - Drop off your cash or check at the Press Argus-Courier offices at 100 N. 11th St. in Van Buren by noon Wednesday.
- Please make checks payable to The Sack Lunch Program. Donations are sent to The Sack Lunch Program daily; so far readers have contributed \$18,054.

satisfaction she receives "from doing for someone" in need.

"At a Christmas party a year ago," Williams said, a young lady from First Baptist Church in Fort Smith expressed interest in serving with the women of Greater Pilgrim Rest Baptist Church of Van Buren. Williams said she asked her, "Do you really want to come?" She said

she did, and "she's been going" ever since.

Women from Greater Pilgrim Rest, including Williams and Reba Campbell, work together every Monday at The Sack Lunch Program.

In addition to serving them a sack lunch, Williams said they "fellowship with those that come."

SEE VOLUNTEERS PAGE 8A



INDEX

TIMES RECORD
Volume 130, Number 350, 32 Pages

Amusements	5B	Markets	7A
Classified	Section D	Nation & World	6A
Comics	6-7B	Obituaries	7-8C
Crossword	7B	Opinions	5A
Darting About	4B	Sports	1-6C
Living	Section B	Weather	8B

TODAY'S DEAL
COOL DEALS \$10 for \$20 to spend at
Goody's Frozen Yogurt
SEE INSIDE A SECTION FOR DETAILS

WEATHER

70/43
0% Chance of Rain
FULL REPORT, 8B

