



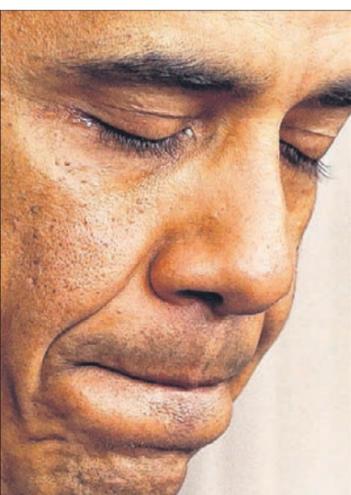
'SHEER TERROR'

Gunman kills 27, including 20 elementary school students, before killing himself
20-year-old kills schoolteacher mom at home; police shed no light on motive



ASSOCIATED PRESS PHOTOS

In this photo provided by the Newtown Bee, Connecticut State Police lead a line of children from the Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Conn., on Friday after shootings at the school.



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 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."

“They had their entire lives ahead of them; birthdays, graduations, weddings, kids of their own. Among the fallen were also teachers, men and women who devoted their lives to helping our children.”

President Barack Obama



Above: A woman waits to hear about her sister, a teacher, on Friday after the shootings.
Below: Parents leave a staging area Friday after being reunited with their children.



MORE INSIDE

School shooting revives gun debate; town shattered, **4A**
Treasure Coast religious leaders to talk about shooting; shooter may have had mental disorder, **6A**

Area educators assess their safety procedures

By Colleen Wixon
colleen.wixon@scripps.com
772-978-2235

As news of the Newtown, Conn., school shooting spread across the country, Treasure Coast educators assessed their own procedures designed to keep children safe while in school.

Two parents called the Indian River County Schools Superintendent's

office asking whether schools were in lockdown, said Denise Roberts, director of risk management for the district. Neither Indian River, nor any other Treasure Coast district, went into lockdown.

St. Lucie County Schools Superintendent Michael Lannon sent a recorded message to all parents Friday night asking them to

See SAFETY, 5A

Talking To Kids About Shootings

- Reassure children of their safety at school. Do not say a similar shooting will never happen here. Instead point out there are teachers and school staff who will help keep them safe.
- Encourage children to ask questions. You want the child to ask questions and not fill-in the blanks themselves.
- Be open and honest. If your child asks a question you don't know the answer to say, "I don't know."
- Families with children of different ages should make your answers age appropriate for each child. Remember children asks questions to help them understand death.
- If using religion to explain death, be clear and not use religious phrases such as, "God needed a little angel," because it may confuse children.
- Monitor how much TV your child and yourself watch about the shooting.

Source: Treasure Coast Hospice Director of Counseling and Social Services Jacki Nardone

Military Moms making sure troops overseas get holiday gifts

By Dan Garcia
Special to Treasure Coast Newspapers

VERO BEACH — In the coldest reaches of Afghanistan, U.S. troops welcome hand warmers and heavy wool socks sent from Indian River County. In Korea, American soldiers welcome Christmas packages filled with nuts, dried fruit, beef jerky and candy. American military personnel

INSIDE

Where you can pick up Holidays for Heroes mailing kits. **14A**

aboard nuclear submarines in the Persian Gulf receive things such as magazines, newspapers and books.

Some creative Vero Beach High School students send U.S. troops Frisbees and Nerf balls to help them cope with down time.

The annual "Holidays for He-

roes" project began in 2006, and the drive could soon total 15,000 gift packages mailed to U.S. service members overseas.

Not bad for a project that started with five Vero Beach moms sending Christmas and Hanukkah packages to their sons serving in far-flung lands.

Today, the Military Moms Prayer Group of Indian River County is conducting its seventh annual "Holiday for Heroes" campaign.

It began with the moms of five St. Edward's School graduates stationed overseas and it has grown rapidly, thanks to hard-working volunteer moms and helpful businesses.

"We want to tell the troops, 'We're thinking of you,' said

Lynn Marie Saint-Vincent, the group's coordinator. "Some of these troops are on their second and third deployments, and they can get lost in what they're doing over there.

"Some military members serving our country get nothing for Christmas because they don't have a church support group or a family group," she said.

See MOMS, 14A

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WEATHER

77°/62°
Rain: 20%
8C

PIPER ANALYSIS

Now that it has reached an agreement with the state over its incentive package, Piper Aircraft Inc. looks to continue to climb back after the economic downturn sent sales into a tailspin.

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What might happen if Congress, Obama don't reach a deal by January?

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