

Heartbreaking

Lone gunman kills 26 at Connecticut school

20 elementary-age children among dead

Killer, 20, apparently commits suicide



Connecticut State Police lead children from the Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Conn., after a mass shooting there Friday. A lone gunman killed 26 people, including 20 children. The shooter reportedly died of a self-inflicted gunshot wound. SHANNON HICKS / NEWTOWN BEE / AP

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CLUES TO A GUNMAN

Shooting suspect Adam Lanza may have had a personality disorder, law enforcement officials say, but no motive has emerged for the killings. **On 8A**

GUN DEBATE FLARES

Gun control advocates in Congress say it's time to act. "Americans are sick and tired of these attacks," says one senator. **On 8A**

PRESIDENT REACTS

A tearful President Barack Obama says, "Our hearts are broken today" and calls for action but doesn't specify what. **On 8A**

VIOLENT LIST

A look at mass shootings in the United States. **On 8A**

A TIME FOR FAITH

Local religious leaders offer prayers and reassurance. **On 9A**

ONLINE EXTRAS

Go to Tennessean.com/schoolshooting for a photo slideshow from Friday's tragedy in Connecticut, as well as videos of an emotional President Barack Obama offering remarks and of local moms' reaction to the shooting.



A woman waits to hear about her sister, a teacher, after the shooting attack at Sandy Hook Elementary School. JESSICA HILL / AP

Be honest when talking to kids

By Jim Myers
The Tennessean

Another mass shooting. Another school. The news hits like a stomach punch first.

Then your children come home from school, and it's hard to look into their eyes and know what to say. It can be even more difficult when adults themselves struggle to make sense of senseless acts.

However, after Friday's tragic shooting at a school in Connecticut, where photos of weeping children and distraught

parents unavoidably seep into the psyches of our children, adults must step in.

It comes at an especially cruel time, when the hope and anticipation of the holidays are pre-empted by terror. That's what makes it so important for parents to be prepared with what to say, and how to say it.

Dr. Kevin Sanders, director of child psychiatry consult services at Monroe Carell Jr. Children's Hospital at Vanderbilt, offers some advice.

» KIDS, 10A

Teachers, faculty act quickly to hide children, help many escape school

By Jocelyn Noveck and John Christoffersen
Associated Press

NEWTOWN, Conn. — First, he killed his mother. Then, the unimaginable followed.

Nobody knows why 20-year-old Adam Lanza shot his mother, why he then took her guns to Sandy Hook Elementary School and murdered 20 children and six adults.

Nancy Lanza's body was found at their home on Yogananda Street in Newtown — after the carnage at the school. A quiet New England town was scarred forever by unthinkable tragedy; a nation seemingly inured to violence found itself stunned by the slaughter of innocents.

On Friday, Lanza drove his mother's car through this 300-year-old town with its fine old churches and towering trees and arrived at a school full of the season's joy. Somehow, he got past a security door to a place where children should have been safe from harm.

Theodore Varga and other fourth-grade teachers were meeting; the glow remained from the previous night's fourth-grade concert.

"It was a lovely day," Varga said. "Everybody was joyful and cheerful. We were ending the week on a high note."

And then, suddenly and unfathomably, gunshots rang out. "I can't even remember how many," he said.

The fourth-graders, the oldest children in the school, were in specialty classes such as

» SHOOTINGS, 9A

Religious charities panel says most operate ethically

Group wants more audits of churches that break the law

By Bob Smietana
The Tennessean

A high-profile panel of religious charities has issued a wish list this holiday season.

The charities want smarter members, plus a few more IRS audits of churches that break the law.

Most of all, they want Congress to leave them alone.

That list sums up the recommendations in a new report from the Commission on Accountability and Policy for Religious Organizations. The report is a response to the "Grassley Six" investigations, in which Republican Sen. Chuck Grassley of Iowa took on six televangelists he suspected of mis-

ing charitable funds.

Grassley has advocated for new regulations on religious charities to prevent misuse of charitable donations.

The commission, which included William Townes, a vice president of the Nashville-based Southern Baptist Convention's executive committee, disagrees. It said that most charities operate ethically. The government, it said, should punish those who break current laws,

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not pass new laws.

"We cannot allow the behavior of a few outliers in the religious and nonprofit sector to threaten the freedoms of those who are not the problem," said Michael Batts, chairman of the

commission.

The report disappointed Rusty Leonard, head of MinistryWatch.com, a North Carolina-based watchdog group

» CHARITIES, 14A

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