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PLANNING SCHOOL MEMORIALS: FEEDBACK FROM THE
COLUMBINE MEMORIAL PLANNING COMMITTEE

by

Rebecka D. Bingham

A thesis submitted to the faculty of

Brigham Young University

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Educational Specialist

Department of Counseling Psychology and Special Education

Brigham Young University

August 2008

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BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY

GRADUATE COMMITTEE APPROVAL

of a thesis submitted by

Rebecka D. Bingham

This thesis has been read by each member of the following graduate committee and by majority vote has been found to be satisfactory.

Date

Melissa Allen Heath, Chair

Date

Marleen Williams

Date

Rachel Crook Lyon

BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY

As chair of the candidate's graduate committee, I have read the thesis of Rebecka D. Bingham in its final form and have found that (1) its format, citations, and bibliographical style are consistent and acceptable and fulfill university and department style requirements; (2) its illustrative materials including figures, tables, and charts are in place; and (3) the final manuscript is satisfactory to the graduate committee and is ready for submission to the university library.

Date

Melissa Allen Heath, Chair

Accepted for the Department

Date

Ellie Young
Graduate Coordinator

Accepted for the College

Date

Barbara Culatta
Associate Dean, McKay School of Education

ABSTRACT

PLANNING SCHOOL MEMORIALS: FEEDBACK FROM THE COLUMBINE MEMORIAL PLANNING COMMITTEE

Rebecka D. Bingham

Department of Counseling Psychology and Special Education

Educational Specialist in School Psychology

On April 20, 1999, twelve students and one faculty member were shot and killed at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado. The two shooters also died. Today, over nine years after the tragedy, the community continues to heal and cope with their loss. Rather than investigating the actual tragedy, this study focused on perceptions of three leaders representing the Columbine Memorial Planning Committee, summarizing their responses to 9 questions related to planning the Columbine Memorial.

Now completed, the memorial invites students; families; the community of Littleton, Colorado; and the world to *never forget* this loss or precious life. This memorial represents a positive avenue for coping with their tragedy, the loss of loved ones, and the violence perpetrated on their school and community. The leaders' feedback is important to consider and provides direction and insight for other schools coping with similar trauma. Additionally, previous research on the topic of planning memorials is extremely limited, even more so for school-based

memorials. More information is needed to guide practice. As a starting point, this thesis provides a brief overview of childhood and adolescent grief, a historical overview of how national tragedies involving children have been memorialized, and subsequently an initial investigation focusing on planning the Columbine Memorial. After reviewing and summarizing the committee members' responses, a list of suggestions are proposed to guide schools in planning memorials. The discussion section compares and contrasts the planning committee's feedback with previous information provided by the National Association of School Psychologists and other publications related to children and memorials.

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INTRODUCTION

On April 20, 1999, students Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold walked into Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado carrying duffel bags containing 20 pound propane bombs. The bombs were set to go off in the cafeteria during lunch. When the bombs failed to detonate, Harris and Klebold began their shooting spree. The shooting lasted from approximately 11:19 a.m. to 12:08 p.m. When it was all over 15 were dead including one teacher, twelve students, and the two shooters, Harris and Klebold. Twenty-four others were injured. The timeline, videos, and newspaper articles describing the Columbine school shootings are archived on the following website: <http://www.cnn.com/SPECIALS/2000/columbine.cd/frameset.exclude.html>

Turning attention from the tragic school shooting, almost eight years in planning, now completed, the Columbine Memorial invites students; families; the community of Littleton, Colorado; and the world to *never forget* this loss of precious life. This memorial represents the direction this community took in forging a positive avenue for coping with their loss. Though perspectives of this memorial may be sought from a variety of individuals, for those outside of Columbine, the memorial planning committee leaders' feedback is important to consider and provides direction and insight for other schools' coping with similar trauma.

Previous research on the topic of planning memorials is extremely limited, even more so for school-based memorials (Heath, Bingham, & Dean, 2008). More information is needed to guide practice. As a starting point, this thesis provides a brief overview of childhood and adolescent grief, a historical overview of how national tragedies involving children have been memorialized, and subsequently an initial investigation focusing on input from three community leaders who assisted in planning the Columbine Memorial.

The Columbine Memorial, honoring the students and teacher who lost their lives, is well documented and serves as a microcosm to investigate larger issues involved in school memorials. After reviewing and summarizing the committee members' responses, a list of suggestions is proposed to guide schools in planning memorials. The discussion section compares and contrasts the planning committee's feedback with previous information provided by the National Association of School Psychologists and other publications related to children and memorials. In particular, the process of planning the Columbine Memorial offers insights into the community's grief and the process of coming together on memorializing the loss of precious and innocent lives. The experiences and challenges in planning this memorial may offer insight for other schools and communities faced with a similar challenge of making sense of tragedy and moving forward, but never forgetting.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Coping with the death of a family member or friend is a challenge facing many school age children. Over two million children and adolescents experience the death of a parent every year (U.S. Census Data, 1990 as cited in Rheingold, Smith, Ruggiero, Saunders, Kilpatric, & Resnick, 2003). In particular, adolescents have a high exposure to death. In a survey of 4,023 adolescents ages 12-17, Rheingold et al. reported that one-third of adolescents experienced the death of a family member within the previous year. One-fifth of adolescents reported the death of a close friend in the past year. Unfortunately, many children and adolescents are left to face their grief with minimal, if any, professional support (Burns & Hoagwood, 2002; Doka, 2000; Wolfelt, 2002).

Childhood and Adolescent Grief

Information related to adults' grief may not perfectly align with children's grief (Doka, 2000). Based on practitioners' experience (Doka; Pfohl, Jimerson, & Lazarus, 2002; Webb, 2002) and research studies (Cohen, Marrarino, & Deblinger, 2006; Worden, 1996), it is important to consider differences in how children of various ages and levels of maturity cope with grief. These differences are principally related to developmental issues that influence the way children understand and respond to death (Berk, 2006; Worden).

Younger Children's Grief

More specifically, Dyregrov (1991) discussed how children of various ages comprehend loss and grief. Children less than 5 years old may have a difficult time grasping the permanence of death. From ages 5 to 10, children have a concrete understanding about the irreversibility of death and the causes behind death. Children in this age range may also become reluctant to talk

about their grief. Boys especially may suppress their true feelings. From age 10 to adolescence, the concept of death can be understood in an abstract as well as concrete manner (Dyregrov).

Adolescents' Grief

Children and adolescents arguably grieve differently than adults. From a developmental point of view, adolescents face the challenges of developing a sense of autonomy, initiating and maintaining intimate friendships and relationships, and determining a course of direction for a future occupation (Balk, 2000). Coleman (1978) theorized that adolescents usually face their issues one at a time until resolved. However, in situations where grief overwhelms daily functioning, bringing a flood of intense emotions, the adolescent may focus on their grief to the exclusion of other developmental tasks.

Manifestations of Grief

Marrone (1997) reviewed the following categories for manifestations of grief. Physical manifestations may include fatigue, diarrhea, chills, and irregular eating patterns. Behavioral manifestations of grief include sleeping problems, startle reactions, risk taking, and increased crying. Grief also impacts cognitive processes, manifested through memory and concentration problems, nightmares, and disturbing thoughts. Additionally, emotional effects are noted: fear, anger, lack of hope, and loss of confidence.

Understanding the grieving process is usually understood from a holistic perspective. A model of grief should consider individual factors, such as previous experience in coping with loss and trauma. Family, friends, and schools are especially important in providing a caring environment for supporting children who are developing coping skills (Doka, 2000; Heath & Sheen, 2005; Pfohl et al., 2002; Wolfelt, 2002).

Factors Impacting the Severity of Grief

Individual coping skills and social/family support help minimize daily disruption and counterbalance the impact of trauma (Worden, 2001). The ability to face tragedy is strengthened by a caring and supportive environment that provides assistance along the path of recovery (Pine & Cohen, 2002). Additionally, the death must be understood in context, considering factors related to the specific event, such as whether the death was anticipated, if the death was witnessed, and if the individual feels some responsibility for the death (Poland & Poland, 2004). Furthermore, cultural, economic, physical, and social factors encourage, permit, or inhibit the accessibility of mental health services (Burns & Hoagwood, 2002) and the quality of relationships with family and friends (Wolfelt, 2002).

Similarly, Moos and his associates (Holahan & Moos, 1994; Moos, Fenn, & Billings, 1988; Moos & Schaefer, 1986, 1993) outlined six aspects impacting how an individual copes with a major life crisis, such as death of a loved one. These include the individual's background and personal factors, event-related factors, physical and social environmental factors, cognitive appraisal, adaptive tasks, and coping skills (Moos & Schaefer, 1986, 1993).

Tasks of Grieving

Rather than viewing the coping process as occurring in sequential stages of grief (Kubler-Ross, 1969), professionals have identified tasks of grief (Balk, 2000; Wolfelt, 2002; Worden, 1996). These are adaptive tasks an individual faces when coping with the death of a loved one. Optimally, with support, the individual develops skills to manage these challenges. It is also important to note that the tasks of grief are never really done, but rather these tasks resurface when the loss is remembered in various contexts: holidays; special occasions, such as

graduation, weddings, and the birth of a child; and when a new tragedy or loss threaten stability and security (Heath, Leavy, Hansen, Ryan, Lawrence, & Sonntag, 2008; Worden).

Balk (2000) indentified five tasks:

(a) to establish the meaning of the event and to comprehend its personal significance, (b) to confront reality and respond to the situational requirements of the event, (c) to sustain interpersonal relationships, (d) to maintain emotional balance, and (e) to preserve a satisfactory self-image and maintain a sense of self-efficacy. (Balk 2000, p. 41)

Somewhat similar in nature, another professional, Wolfelt (2002), listed six tasks of children's grieving: (a) Acknowledge death is a reality; (b) face the pain with support; (c) adapt proper perspective, building memories of the deceased, (d) redefine self in absence of the deceased; (e) find new meaning in one's life after the death; and (f) build new long term supportive relationships.

Gender Differences in Children's Grief

Grief is an issue facing all children: Death and loss are a part of the human condition. Each child's expression of grief must be considered in the context of society and the manner in which society accepts gender differences in the expression of grief. Though not a major focus in the literature, studies have noted gender differences in the outward expression of children's grief (Worden, 1996). However, more research needs to investigate the interplay between gender differences in children's grief (Stroebe, 1998). As each child handles grief differently there is a continual need for psychologists and counselors to work together in finding practical interventions that work for children and adolescents, noting gender differences in the individual's response to intervention. While one idea may not meet a particular child's needs, there should be a rich network of supportive information to assist practitioners in refining

interventions. The challenge is to work with societal norms regarding gender differences, sensitively supporting the child through their personal grieving process.

Worden (1996) found that preteen boys who lost a parent were more likely to be withdrawn and show symptoms of anxiousness and depression than boys who lost a sibling. Both preteen boys and adolescent boys who lost parents were more likely to be at risk than those who lost siblings. However, adolescent girls who lost a sibling showed higher levels of anxiety and depression than adolescent girls who lost a parent. Worden was not sure the reasons behind these results, but noted that 75% of the parentally bereaved boys had lost a father, while 25% had lost a mother.

While gender differences are evident in the reactions of children to the loss of a parent or sibling, studies have found slightly different results. Abdelnoor and Hollins (2004) found that parentally and sibling bereaved girls experienced more difficulties than bereaved boys. However, there is a stronger relationship between the gender of the deceased and bereaved in those who struggled than in either gender group separately. In particular, girls who lost a mother were most affected (Abdelnoor & Hollins).

Acknowledging the many developmental and gender differences in children's grief, Harvard's Child Bereavement Study found that teenage boys in particular felt a need to act strong for the benefit of the surviving parent (Worden, 1996). After the death of his father, one 16-year-old boy stated, "I felt like I had better act that it didn't affect me as much. It made her feel better. I don't think she wanted to see me as a total wreck" (Worden, p. 20).

Another gender difference in the way children handle the grieving process is in their ability to communicate their feelings to others. In the early months after the death of a close family member, The Child Bereavement Study found that only half of the children were able to

talk to their friends about the death (Worden, 1996). Girls were more likely to discuss the death with their friends, especially adolescent girls. Boys, particularly preteen boys, were the least likely to speak to their friends about the death. One plausible reason for more adolescent boys being able to discuss their grief with peers (than were the pre-teen boys) may be related to having a girlfriend who the teen felt comfortable talking with about his feelings (Worden).

The children in the Harvard study listed several reasons that it was difficult to talk to their friends about their loss. Worden's list includes the following:

(a) fear of crying in front of friends, (b) the subject never arises, (c) friends are protective of the bereaved child, (d) awkwardness on the part of the friends, (e) friends not knowing about the death, (f) not caring, (g) circumstances of the death, and (h) it feels too personal. (Worden, 1996, pp. 48-50)

In the event of a large scale disaster or an extremely traumatic event, such as a natural disaster, school shooting, or terrorist attack, grief need not be experienced in isolation. Particularly in a school setting, students who suffer a similar loss and experience a comparable sense of trauma have a large social support network from which to draw strength. The school's social connectedness opens avenues for communication, given the shared experience (Cox et al., 2007). This shared experience and open communication build a bond, particularly for adolescents and adults. Shared memories and a supportive network ease the grieving process. On the other hand, some children and adolescents who do not readily link into the connectedness of a school community may feel overwhelmed by the pressure to share their thoughts and feelings with so many others. Therefore, support following a school's tragedy or loss must take into account both the individual and the group, being sensitive to diverse needs and carefully

observing the compatibility between what is needed and what is offered (Heath, Leavy, et al., 2008).

Remembering on a larger scale through memorials can help unify children, adolescents and adults who are grieving (Heath, Bingham, & Dean, 2008). It is proposed that memorials facilitate communication, particularly for those who may struggle to talk about their grief.

The Importance of Remembering in Children's Grief

A variety of rituals are associated with death. These rituals vary with time, location, and culture. Many societies memorialize the dead with ceremonies such as speeches, funerals, and wakes. One of the purposes of performing these rites is to remember the life of the deceased individual. Another purpose is to provide a familiar outlet of grief for family and friends. Rituals surrounding death allow a community to support one another after the loss in a manner that is familiar, socially approved by the community, and practiced over time.

Throughout history, mankind has attempted to leave their mark across time and space by building memorials. One only has to look at the pyramids of ancient Egypt or the Taj Mahal in India to consider the scope of memorials. While the written history of a life may be lost, forgotten, or ignored by future generations, a monument serves as a physical reminder. Monuments are physical objects that force people to consider the reality of others who have gone on before them. Even if the history behind the ancient memorials is open for interpretation, their very existence causes people to speculate, contemplate, and remember.

Historically, memorials have honored those who lost their lives in war. Memorials served as a way for the community to come together and deal with a common loss. Communities wanted others to remember those who died in war. Names of the deceased were carved in a monument: Statues were dedicated in their honor. The memorial was a physical object that

people could see and touch, not meant to replace the loss, but intended to honor and remember the loss. The memorial declares that these individuals, now deceased, were here. The memorial stands as a landmark to teach future generations about those who had gone before them and sacrificed their lives.

Memorials are built in an attempt to create something lasting when faced with the temporary nature of life and the finality of death. Monuments to those who lost their lives defending their country in times of war are a typical form of a memorial found in many communities. However, more recently large scale tragedies such as fires, the Oklahoma City bombing; the events of September 11, 2001; and school shootings also evoke a community response to memorialize the scope of the disaster. In the case of tragedies and disasters, there seems to be a desire to share lessons learned from these events so that others may not forget. The French historian Pierre Nora (1989, p. 7) noted, “we speak so much of memory because there is so little of it left:”

These *lieux de mémoire* are fundamentally remains, the ultimate embodiments of a memorial consciousness that has barely survived in a historical age that calls out for memory because it has abandoned it. They make their appearance by virtue of the deritualization of the world—producing, manifesting, establishing, constructing, decreeing, and maintaining by artifice and by will a society deeply absorbed in its own transformation and renewal, one that inherently values the new over the ancient, the young over the old, the future over the past. (Nora, p. 12)

Nora believes “the tradition of memory” is coming to an end. Memorials in modern time are created in defiance of a culture inclined to quickly forget the past and the lessons that may be learned from it.

Historical Overview: Supporting Children after a Disaster

The stark contrast of our expectation for children's safety in schools and the violation of that trust by a school shooting, is especially difficult to understand. This type of violation and loss of life expands to include the larger community, and, with the assistance of mass media, further expands to include the national and international community. Many people want to do something to help or to express their grief when they hear about heartrending events such as the Columbine High School shootings resulting in the death of 12 innocent students, 1 teacher, and 2 perpetrators. While the stories of school shootings have captured national attention and raised concerns about the safety of schools, it is important to look at these events in a historical construct.

Although post-disaster relief in helping communities rebuild has an established history (Lindemann, 1944, 1979; Weaver, Dingman, Morgan, Hong, & North, 2000), until more recently, school-based crisis intervention received minimal coverage (Brock, Sandoval, & Lewis, 1996, 2001; Johnson, 2000; Pitcher & Poland, 1992; Sandoval, 1985). However, previous disasters offer insight into how schools can strengthen support following a tragedy. In particular, memorials have been and continue to be one aspect of helping communities grieve and heal over time.

Collinwood, Ohio: Memorial Garden

Lake View Elementary in Collinwood, Ohio was destroyed by fire on March 4, 1908. Tragedy hit this community with the death of 172 children, almost half of the students attending the school, as well as two teachers and one rescuer. Historically this fire was responsible for the largest number of fire-related deaths in a U.S. school (Jablonski, 2003).

Rebuilding a new school adjacent to the original building became a community project as various individuals united to raise money for the new structure. Improved safety standards including multiple walls and fire walls were incorporated into the new school. On the school's original site the Collinwood Memorial Garden was built to honor those who tragically died in the fire. Also, markers listing the 175 victims were placed in the local Lakeview Cemetery and the memorial garden to remind the community of each individual who died in the tragedy.

A new elementary school was completed in 1910 and remained in use until the early 1970s. The school was then vacant for almost 30 years, until it was destroyed in 2004. The abandoned memorial garden and the unoccupied school fueled children's ghost stories about the area being haunted by children who died in the fire. However, the memorial garden was rededicated in 2003 when it was identified with a state historical marker and guaranteed state funding for continued upkeep (Jablonski, 2003). Recently the newly dedicated Memorial Elementary, which was built on the previous school's site, opened its doors for the 2005-2006 school year.

Bath, Michigan: Statue of Girl with a Kitten

Although the media purports school violence as a recent occurrence, in 1927 an angry school board member, Andrew Kehoe, detonated explosives at a school in Bath Michigan, killing almost three times as many as the number murdered in Columbine's 1999 school shooting (Ellsworth, 1928; Johnston, 1999). Overwhelmed by financial difficulties on his farm and his wife's medical problems, Kehoe was outraged when the school district proposed an increase in property taxes to building a new school near his home.

Kehoe was employed by the school as a handyman. He used his access to the school to plot his revenge. Over a period of time, he placed dynamite under the school's floorboards. On

May 18, 1927, Kehoe killed his wife when he set off an explosion that destroyed his home. Then he detonated the dynamite in the school. In the final act of his destruction, Kehoe drove his own explosive laden vehicle to the school. He parked near the sight of the blast, and called out to the superintendent who was involved in rescue efforts. As the superintendent approached the vehicle Kehoe set off his final discharge killing himself, the superintendent, and several others. Tragically, the explosions killed a total of 45 and injured an additional 58. Of the dead, 38 were children (Ellsworth, 1928).

Immediately, Michigan's Governor, Fred Green, organized the Bath Relief Fund and asked the community to donate money. Children participated by donating pennies to fund a memorial statue, a young girl holding a cat. Collecting pennies for the purchase of a memorial statue was an effective way to help the children in the community express their grief and participate in the healing and helping process. The inscription on the accompanying plaque read: "This bronze statue was sculpted by University of Michigan Professor Carlton W Angell in memory of the victims of the Bath School Disaster of May 18, 1927 . . ." (Bauerl, 2002-2003; Parker, 1992). This statue, *Girl with a Kitten*, is now housed in the Bath School Museum located in a middle school near the site of the destroyed Bath School. Included in a display are school memorabilia and recovered items donated by families of the survivors. Also, one of the museum's keepsakes is a U.S. flag which flew over the school on May 18, 1927.

The Bath community faced the challenge of healing and getting back to normal. In the fall of 1927 as school began, classes were held in several community buildings. Construction plans to rebuild the destroyed portion of the school were donated by architect, Warren Holmes. One of Michigan's senators, James Couzens donated his own money to help rebuild the school. A year later, on August 18, 1928, the renovated Bath Elementary was dedicated.

In 1975, almost 50 years after the refurbished school was dedicated, the outdated building was leveled and replaced with a park dedicated to the Bath victims. At the park's entrance, a bronze plaque attached to a large boulder lists names of those who died in the explosions. In the center of the park, a cupola is displayed as the only preserved piece salvaged from the original school building.

Although in national and international news, the Bath incident was quickly overshadowed by Charles Lindbergh's 1927 transatlantic flight (Johnston, 1999), the memorial represents a community that has not forgotten. Despite its obscurity, Kehoe's name is linked to the bombing that murdered the largest number of individuals in a U.S. school. In fact, until the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing, the Bath disaster was also the deadliest act of U.S. domestic terrorism (Parker, 1992; Snell, 2002). For families affected by the disaster, Andrew Kehoe, May 18, 1927, and the 45 victims are not forgotten. The museum and park are places where the victims can be remembered, the history retold to younger generations, and the community can grieve.

Rusk County, Texas: New London Museum

On March 18, 1937, an undetected gas leak in London Consolidated School in Rusk County, Texas caused an explosion and fire, killing almost 300 students and teachers (Smith, 1937). Most of the dead were buried in local cemeteries. Hundreds of tombstones were decorated with small individualized porcelain pictures, others with colorful marbles pushed into fresh cement, making a decorative border of concrete around the graves. Simplistically uniform, many tombstones list only minimal information, typically the child's or adult's name, date of birth and death, and a one sentence phrase. With the passage of time, many of the original markers were replaced with more substantial headstones.

This small oil town built a new school in 1938. Then, almost two years after the accident,

in 1939, a 32 foot high cenotaph containing twelve figures depicting children turning in homework to teachers and listing names of those who died in the explosion was dedicated (<http://www.nlse.org/monument.html>).

Today a small museum also honors the lives of those who died. In a 2001 interview by National Public Radio (NPR) survivor Mollie Ward told about her experience (Ydstie, 2001). Molly was 10-years-old at the time of the disaster. She remembered how, following the explosion, her neighbors stayed inside their homes, crying so loudly that neighbors heard each others' anguished cries. Although the Red Cross offered physical aid, Molly noted that students and adults would have benefited from counseling and someone to talk with about the disaster. However, this type of support was never offered. Mollie described life after the disaster.

Well, the best that I can describe is they did not talk about it. They may have talked within the homes, but when we went back to school within about two weeks, this was never brought up at school and it was never brought up until the day we graduated. (Ydstie, 2001)

Following this massive disaster, lawmakers responded immediately in an effort to ensure that such a disaster would never be repeated. Laws were proposed and approved, mandating oil/gas companies tag natural gas with an offensive odor. Previously, natural gas leaks were odorless. This new additive made it possible to easily detect leaks.

Today, in New London, Texas, several of the community's senior citizens serve as guides in the museum. Several are survivors of the disaster and talk openly about the day "a generation died" (Hilliard, n.d.). The museum displays original 1937 news articles about the disaster, salvaged relics from the original school, and historical pieces donated by survivors. In the 2001 NPR interview, Mollie stated that after years of silence, she and others talk comfortably with

tourists about the disaster. In fact, telling their story is cathartic and provides some closure (Hilliard, n.d.; Ydstie, 2001).

The idea for the museum began in the 1980s when curious young students asked Mollie about what she remembered. Instead of pushing questions aside and trying to ignore her memories, she suddenly realized that this piece of history should *not* be forgotten. Prior to the museum, the New London school disaster was tucked away in scrapbooks, quietly recounted in stories passed from survivors to their children and grandchildren. Currently, the museum is housed in an old drug store, across from the school's original site.

Over the years, Mollie took it upon herself to collect items, poems, pictures, and keepsakes. Many of the items, recovered from the heap of rubble following the explosion, were used to identify bodies: a small pocket knife, a child's shoe, and a dress. Although an historical marker in New London indicates that 296 individuals were killed in the explosion, Ward's intensive search identified 305 who died that day or shortly thereafter. This mismatch in numbers occurred because some of the families, including migrant workers, left town immediately after the accident and were not confirmed in the post-disaster count. Ward stated,

For decades, the people of New London didn't talk about what happened here ...it was simply too terrible, the images too horrific. The museum movement helped change all that, and now survivors - once silent - are sharing their stories. (Hilliard, n.d)

After 70 years, the healing continues, shedding light on long term effects of disasters and the human need to *never forget*.

Washington, DC: Holocaust Museum, Daniel's Story

Some memorials choose to take the incomprehensible loss of large scale tragedies such as the Holocaust, and break it down by focusing on the story of one person. This can personalize

loss and provide a context for the dates and names typically recorded in history books. The Washington, DC Holocaust Museum has a display entitled *Remembering the Children: Daniel's Story* (Slesin, 1993). In planning the memorial, the designers were faced with the challenging task of telling the story of over 1 million children killed in Nazi Germany, without traumatizing children today. The memorial is designed around the story of one child, Daniel. Visitors can walk through rooms depicting a typical Jewish family, read Daniel's diary and see his family's personal effects. Visitors witness the change in circumstances that occurred for Jewish families during this time as comfortable surroundings are replaced by a crowded unclean environment and fewer rations of food. One of the museum's goals was to have children leave the display thinking, "I'll never forget Daniel's story, and I'm going to do something about it" (Slesin, 1993, p. C1). The purpose of such a memorial is to educate children's hearts as well as their minds (Hartman, 1995).

Hiroshima, Japan: Statue of Sadako

On August 6 and August 9, 1945, almost 100,000 individuals, mostly civilians, died when two atomic bombs were dropped on Japan, one on Hiroshima and the other on Nagasaki. A park in Hiroshima containing two interactive displays memorializes those who died. Children can ring the park's large bell or make paper cranes to place by the statue of a girl with outstretched arms. This statue was built to remember Sadako Sasaki, a young girl who died from Leukemia caused by radiation exposure after the bomb. Sadako was trying to make 1000 paper cranes so that according to a Japanese legend, her wish to be healed might be granted. Several versions of Sadako's story have been published. Recently the story was published in the format of a picture book for young children (Coerr, 1993).

Children around the world can fold origami paper cranes to be mailed to Hiroshima. The cranes are hung on strings around the statue. The displayed cranes are recycled into park souvenirs. The statue was so popular that a similar statue of Sadako was created in Seattle's Peace Park. A statement is inscribed at the base of the statue: "This is our cry, This is our prayer, Peace in the world."

Washington, DC: Vietnam Veterans Memorial

The Vietnam Veterans Memorial Monument was dedicated in November 1982. The monument contains the names of 58,256 soldiers who died or were reported missing in action engraved on a black granite wall (Scruggs & Swerdlow, 1985; Thompson, 2007). The memorial has become interactive as children and adults make rubbings of names with paper and graphite. The wall also became a location for visitors to place flowers, notes, or gifts to honor veterans or to acknowledge the loss of someone they knew. The appeal of this action oriented memorial is overwhelmingly positive for children and adults.

Oklahoma City, Oklahoma: National Memorial

When Timothy McVeigh detonated explosives outside of the Alfred P. Murrah federal building, 168 individuals died: 19 of the murdered victims were children (Call & Pfefferbaum, 1999). Over 500 individuals were injured. A massive memorial was planned to honor those who died. Children from across the U.S. participated by painting tiles. These tiles decorate a large wall in the children's area of the memorial. The designers also placed chalkboards into the sidewalk with buckets of chalk, inviting children to draw or write messages to express their feelings.

President Clinton praised Oklahoma City on the 10th anniversary of the Oklahoma City bombing: "Oklahoma City mourned its losses, embraced its survivors, built a magnificent

monument to honor and remember, and then built the new federal building to serve its citizens and show that a terrorist act could not prevail” (Witt, 2005).

Planning Memorials: Types and Stages of Memorials

There are three stages of a memorial. After a tragic event, spontaneous memorials spring up. People bring flowers, teddy bears, and leave notes for the victims and their families. After this initial stage, items left at the temporary memorial may be preserved, given to the families, or removed. Eventually, the temporary memorials must be taken down so that the return to normalcy can begin. The next step is a planning stage for a more permanent memorial. The planning for these memorials can take years and millions of dollars. The final stage is the completion and maintenance of the permanent memorial.

Doss (2002) notes that it is often the sites of the deaths, not the homes of the deceased or the burial spots that attract the spontaneous shrines and public visitations. She speculates that because modern society is often insulated from the realities of death, people make pilgrimages to these locations in order to see or touch the experience for themselves. It has become a socially acceptable form of grieving and people who gather at these sites may be looking for answers and perhaps a way to comfort others or receive comfort themselves. Often this is where the impromptu, temporary memorials begin. This may explain why many communities choose a location for a permanent memorial that is near where the tragedy occurred.

Spontaneous Memorials

Recent school shootings over the past decade gave rise to spontaneous memorials. In particular Springfield, Oregon’s Thurston High School (May 21, 1998); Littleton, Colorado’s Columbine High School (April 20, 1999); and, most recently, Blacksburg, Virginia’s Virginia Tech (April 16, 2007) were specific tragedies that prompted an outpouring of sympathy.

Individuals, residents and visitors, brought flowers, gifts, notes, pictures, candles, and balloons to the site of the tragedy. Paine (2007) noted that the impromptu memorials after the Thurston, Oregon, school shooting were a visible demonstration of community support that were often a positive way for people and specifically students to express their emotions and support for the families of those affected. In the example of Thurston, a chain link fence in front of the school was the location for the impromptu memorial. Thousands honored those who lost their lives by bringing flowers and gifts. The colorful display also became the location that many people gathered to express their grief and acknowledge the reality of the loss.

Following the shootings at Virginia Tech, a spontaneous memorial was created near Burrus Hall. The impromptu memorial contained notes, gifts, etc. similar to those previously discussed. The Virginia Tech Memorial also included a stone for each person who lost their life. Virginia Tech has also taken the approach of creating an “intermediate memorial” that will be in place once students return in the fall and remain there until a permanent memorial is decided upon and built in a different location.

The Virginia Tech memorial committee consisted of four students, an alumnus, two staff members, two faculty members, and was chaired by Vice President of Alumni Relations Tom Tillar. The committee felt that keeping the design of the original memorial would help with the healing process.

The memorial will consist of small upright Hokie Stones etched with the names of each deceased victim, embedded in an arc of crushed gravel, and surrounded by a walking path for viewing. Construction will begin immediately, include some materials donated by generous individuals and companies, and is expected to be completed before students return for Fall Semester. It will remain in place until a permanent memorial is erected

elsewhere. The stones from the temporary memorial will be offered to the families after completion of the intermediate memorial. (Hincker, 2007)

Internet Memorial Sites

Another illustration of an impromptu memorial is the formation of internet memorial sites. These sites serve as a place where people can comment and offer support inconspicuously. This fills the need of expression, but does not provide the face to face contact that some people find beneficial to the grieving process. However, the internet memorials offer people from all over the world an opportunity to express their sorrow to the victims and their families without leaving their homes.

For example, after the Virginia Tech tragedy an internet site hosted by the University [rosa.hosting.vt.edu/index.php/memorial/], displayed over 36,000 comments and notes posted from April 17 through April 20, 2007. The University sanctioning of the site created a virtual location where people from diverse places could offer their condolences and prayers.

Challenges in Planning Memorials

The U.S. Department of Education recently published guidelines with respect to school memorials. Schools are advised to carefully consider the ramifications of placing permanent memorials in schools. There seems to be a consensus that the victims of suicide should not be memorialized at schools because this could glamorize their deaths and lead to a contagion effect. However, there is still much to be decided about appropriate ways to remember others in the school community who have died. One of the concerns is the possibility of retraumatization for the family members or friends. This is especially true for tragedies that have occurred at the school. Designs for a permanent memorial may need to be flexible as they consider how the community's needs may change over time. The initial cost of a memorial and the cost of upkeep

also need to be considered. The opinions of family members need to be carefully gathered and cultural sensitivity should be used with any type of memorial (U.S. Department of Education, 2007).

Another potential area of conflict is the inclusion of religious themes in memorials. This is especially sensitive for memorials in the public schools because of laws concerning the separation of church and state. Memorial committees may have to prioritize who the memorial is for in order to answer these questions. Although religious beliefs provide support for individuals, this aspect must be carefully considered prior to finalizing plans for a permanent memorial.

Another example of the challenges when incorporating religion in school memorials is that of Beslan, Russia. The community, mostly composed of two major religious groups (Russian Orthodox and Muslim), struggled to publicly honor and remember the 333 hostages who were killed three years ago. These groups are struggling to find agreement on a suitable memorial. Representing the Muslim side of the Beslan memorial debate, Sheikh Ravil Gainutdin, chairman of the Council of Russian Muftis, made the following statement:

It is not acceptable to present this tragedy as the tragedy of followers of only one religion We need a monument on this site that symbolizes a national tragedy, without any religious undertones, where everyone can come and shed their tears. (Lowe, 2007)

Some cultures do not support the building of permanent memorials. The Amish School shootings in October 2, 2006, provide another example of how religious beliefs affect individuals' perceptions of memorials. The scene of the disaster, the school house, was demolished and the community, with outside support, built a new school. However no memorial is planned for the 5 dead and 5 living victims because the Amish community considers statues and memorials as "exalting" the individual, an act that is contrary to their religious beliefs.

Statement of Problem

There is a limited amount of research investigating or describing the planning of memorials specifically associated with school related tragedies. Although no one wants to think of such a tragedy occurring in their school, information from those who have experienced this challenge may greatly benefit others faced with such a task. Such information needs to be readily available to assist those planning a memorial. The findings of this study would offer a starting point for schools to adapt and individualize suggested guidelines to fit the specific needs of their school and community.

Statement of Purpose

This thesis provides (a) a brief overview of childhood and adolescent grief, (b) a historical overview of how national tragedies involving children have been memorialized, and (c) a focus on planning the Columbine Memorial. This thesis will review the planning process of the recently opened Columbine Memorial, honoring the teacher and 12 students who lost their lives at Columbine High School, as a microcosm to consider larger issues involved in planning and building school memorials. After reviewing the topic of school memorials from a historical viewpoint, feedback from three leaders of the Columbine Memorial Planning Committee provides a contemporary view of challenges and their solutions in helping a community come together and heal.

Research Question

The primary purpose of this thesis is exploratory in nature and based on the following research question: What basic guidelines for planning a school memorial can be gleaned from those who were involved in planning the Columbine Memorial? In order to assist in more clearly

understanding the overarching research question, the participants were asked nine open-ended questions. For a complete list of the questions refer to Appendix A.

Importance of Study

Historian Kenneth Foote (2003) argued that Americans have responded to sites of violence in one of four ways. The first way is sanctification. This occurs when a violent event comes to have a deeper meaning in the national culture such as the Gettysburg National Military Cemetery. The second method, designation, is a lesser version of sanctification where the site is recognized as significant, but is not dedicated. The third type, rectified sites, are still used for their same purpose. Obliteration is the final method where the location of a tragedy is demolished (Foote). It is possible to see how these four responses have played out in how tragedies have been memorialized both in the past and in recent history

The type of memorial investigated in this thesis, the Columbine Memorial, is what Foote (2003) referred to as a sanctified site. The planning of permanent memorials can be a long and challenging process, physically, emotionally, and financially. Money and design details are problems encountered by planning committees (Paine, 2007). Paine reported that the Thurston High Memorial committee faced difficulties with managing the financial end of budgeting, planning, and building the memorial; coming to an agreement on the memorial's design; and moving forward to the conclusion of carrying out plans and funding to the final stages of construction. After a length of time, the initial committee disbanded and another planning committee finished the preparations. The memorial was dedicated on May 21, 2003, the fifth anniversary of the shooting. The memorial was constructed near the high school. There is a small park with benches, a representation of the Thurston Memorial Fence, the site of the spontaneous

memorial, and a basalt pillar engraved with the words: “This memorial shall stand forever in memory of Mikael Nickolauson and Ben Walker...”

Limited information is available on the topic of school memorials. This study is an important introductory step in expanding knowledge on the process of planning a memorial and providing information to guide schools and communities. This investigation will serve as an initial basis for future studies, providing general information and guidelines for schools faced with initiating, planning, and overseeing the construction of a school memorial.

This research project focused on how one school, Columbine High School, and community planned a memorial, honoring those who died and were injured in the Columbine High School shooting. Based on a thorough review of the literature, Heath, Bingham, and Dean (2008) determined that several aspects of school-based memorials were virtually unexplored. Although some guidelines have been suggested (NASP, 2002; Paine, 2007), these guidelines lack a research-based foundation. Because of this limitation and the responsibility of schools to respond effectively in comforting students and communities following a disaster, this research is not only important, it is imperative.

METHODS

Addressing this research gap and initiating an investigation of planning memorials to support healthy avenues for coping with traumatic grief, this study was designed as an exploratory study (Creswell, 2003; Grinnell & Unrau, 2008). Simply stated, this thesis proposed to gather an initial foundation for future research. However, the design of this study is not to be confused with a qualitative research design. Ultimately participants' information, their response to questions on the e-mail survey, was reduced and summarized in a much more simplistic manner than would be prescribed by a qualitative research study.

This study is described as exploratory research, the primary emphasis is on gaining insight by investigating an area previously unexplored (Grinnell & Unrau, 2005; Grinnell, Williams, & Unrau, 2008). This research provides a place to start, a stepping stone for future research expanding beyond preliminary investigation. Exploratory research is particularly helpful in creating a higher level of specificity, breaking a vast generic mass into smaller defined pieces.

Participants

The participants were purposefully selected by the primary investigator from information available on the Columbine Memorial website. The Columbine tragedy and Memorial are well documented on an internet website [<http://www.columbinememorial.org/>].

This website listed three key leaders involved in the Columbine Memorial Planning Committee and their contact information (phone number and e-mail address). After e-mailing these three leaders, all responded by e-mail and two followed up with a phone call. After the purpose of the study was explained, all three agreed to participate in this study. Although participants were offered three different response formats (e-mail electronic version, a hard copy mailed by U.S. Postal Service, or a phone interview format), all elected to respond via e-mail.

Participants were involved in several aspects of the planning committee, all assisted with fund raising. In regard to age, participants were 40 years and older. Two were female and one was male. Two of the committee members served on the memorial planning committee since the initial planning stages in 1999. Although one of the participants was not initially involved, this individual participated heavily over the past several years.

Questionnaire

Due to the limited information available on this topic, it was decided that an open ended questionnaire would be used to gather preliminary information that could be utilized in further studies. (Richardson, 1996; Schwarz, 1999). The survey was designed to ask several broad open-ended questions about participants' considerations in planning the Columbine Memorial. More specifically, financial considerations, student and community response, and participants' insights regarding lessons learned, advice they would offer to others planning a school memorial. Also prior to developing the questionnaire, an expert experienced in assisting schools following school tragedies (including school shootings) reviewed the type and purpose of questions considered for the questionnaire.

Additionally, sensitivity and respect for the committee members' experience were emphasized when considering which questions to include in the questionnaire. Prior to finalizing these questions, options were reviewed by three individuals: (a) the previously mentioned school psychologist, (b) a licensed psychologist experienced in school-based crisis intervention, and (c) one of the Columbine committee leaders. In particular, these three individuals reviewed the questions to ensure sensitivity and appropriateness. Finally, questions were approved by Brigham Young University's Institutional Review Board (see Appendix A, Letter of Consent; and Appendix B, Questionnaire).

The final drafted survey included nine semi-structured open-ended questions, providing participants the opportunity to respond using their own expressions. The reasoning for selecting this format of questions, open-ended questions avoid restrictions imposed by forced choice or close-ended questions (Schwarz, 1999). Particularly, because this is an initial exploratory study and potential response options were not well defined in the literature, open-ended questions permitted participants to more accurately represent their points of view.

The questionnaire is included in Appendix B. The nine questions are listed below:

1. In regard to the Columbine Memorial, explain how the memorial planning process began? Who or what were the driving forces? How and to what extent were students involved?
2. How were memorial committee members selected? What factors were considered in the selection process?
3. Please explain the fundraising and how donations were handled.
4. Regarding the Columbine Memorial, explain the key components of the planning and decision making process.
5. How did financing affect the process of planning and ultimately selecting the design?
6. In planning a memorial, considering the emotional needs of students and families, what special considerations were implemented on their behalf?
7. Now that the memorial is completed, how has the community responded?
8. Now that the memorial is completed, how have students responded?
9. What lessons did you learn that would be helpful to others in a similar situation--planning a school memorial?

Participants gave their consent to participate (consent letter is included in Appendix A). All three participants permitted the lead investigator to integrate comments and use direct quotes in explaining the results of this study. Participants were offered the opportunity to review the final write-up prior to finalizing the thesis or publishing/presenting results. Participants will ensure accuracy of comments and interpretation of those comments.

Coding Participants' Responses

Participants' responses were initially summarized by the primary investigator, then coded by two reviewers, the primary investigator and a licensed psychologist familiar with school-based crisis intervention. Both reviewers were female, ages 29 and 53. The primary investigator holds a graduate degree in history (MA) and is currently completing her final year in a School Psychology graduate program. The licensed psychologist (UT) holds a doctoral degree in School Psychology and is currently an associate professor at Brigham Young University. Disagreements in coding were reviewed and final coding determined by a third reviewer, a licensed psychologist familiar with this research study.

Responses to each question were initially broken into basic themes, points, or topics, then coded to represent the three participants' responses. Under each question, coding topics consisted of categorizing participants' responses into one of three categories: *supported*, *not supported*, or *not addressed*. In other words, initially all three sets of participants' responses to each question were described and summarized by identifying basic themes. Then, each participant's responses were carefully reviewed to determine which of the topics were mentioned and supported in their response (*supported*); which topics were mentioned and not supported (*not supported*); and which topics were not mentioned (*not addressed*).

Developing Recommendations: Lessons Learned

Based on participants' responses, informative *lessons learned* were developed. These responses and information from other published guidelines for memorials were compiled into a list of considerations for others planning a memorial (see Appendix C). These suggestions, though specific to the Columbine Memorial, also provide general direction for others faced with planning school-based memorials. In addition to suggestions, common difficulties and specific points of concern were included. Additionally, the Columbine committee members' recommendations were considered in the context of current research on how children respond to trauma and loss, more specifically focusing on the tasks of grief (Heath, Bingham, et al., 2008; Worden, 1996; Wolfelt, 2002).

RESULTS

Summary of Responses

Participants' responses to each of the nine questions are summarized in separate tables. Each table follows the same format: The three participants' responses were described by listing specific content, then designating the number of participants who collaborated on specific points (*supported*), the number of participants who offered contrasting information on specific points (*not supported*), and the number of participants who did not address that particular point (*not addressed*). Because responses were based on each individual's perception of the planning process, points that were *not addressed* merely indicated that when an open-ended question was posed, the participant did not freely offer a reply that supported this particular comment or point of view. Although points of disagreement indicate different perspectives, these differences do not necessarily indicate that any one response is correct and another response is incorrect.

Responses to Question 1

In regard to the Columbine Memorial, explain how the memorial planning process began? Who or what were the driving forces? How and to what extent were students involved?

The two respondents who were involved in the memorial planning process from the early stages reported that the memorial planning process began with the formation of a spontaneous memorial and an influx of monetary donations. One participant commented, "The planning process started in response to numerous public requests for planning of a permanent memorial and because nearly \$100,000 in unsolicited donations came in within the first couple months after the shootings." The local government leaders as well as community members began requesting a permanent memorial. One member reported, "There wasn't any one specific community group or person that was the driving force-rather a small group of dedicated

individuals who felt that a Memorial was appropriate and necessary.” Committee meetings were open to everyone. The students were involved in the formation of the spontaneous memorial at Clement Park, and student feedback in the memorial design was solicited through surveys. Students became less involved as time passed, and the original students graduated and moved to other locations. For more information refer to Table 1.

Responses to Question 2

How were memorial committee members selected? What factors were considered in the selection process? All three committee members agreed that there was no selection process. The meetings were opened to all those who wished to attend. One member commented that “For at least two years, the committee consisted of the 50-75 who came to the original committee meeting.” Another participant noted that “over time participation dwindled down to 12-15 members who actively attended meetings, with approximately half of those actively involved in the day to day business” of the memorial. One committee member speculated that those who left did so because ‘they found our task was difficult and would take a long time’ The member also noted that “The ‘final’ committee was a mix of government officials, business and community leaders, faculty, students, parents of students and family members of the deceased.” For more information refer to Table 2.

Table 1

Initial Planning, Driving Forces, & Student Involvement
Question 1 Responses: Points of Agreement & Disagreement

Content of Response (<i>n</i> = 2)	Supported	Not Supported	Not Addressed
<u>Initial Memorial Planning Process</u>			
Informal (spontaneous) memorial in nearby Clement Park	2	0	0
Infusion of monetary donations	2	0	0
About 6-8 weeks after disaster, community mtg held, Approximately 75 attended	2 1	0 0	0 1
<u>Driving Forces</u>			
Major driving force: Community & local government officials (Jefferson County) initiated planning	1	0	1
Major driving force: Small group of dedicated individuals who believed memorial was <i>appropriate and</i> <i>necessary</i>	1	0	1
Success of students' <i>informal & spontaneous</i> memorial sparked interest for permanent memorial	2	0	0
A community effort, many were involved in planning committee's start-up	2	0	0
<u>Student Involvement</u>			
<i>Spontaneous & informal</i> memorial at Clement Park	2	0	0
Students requested a permanent memorial	1	0	1
Students invited to participate: Completed surveys & attended mtgs to discuss memorial design	2	0	0
Students participated in memorial planning mtgs	2	0	0
After graduating, students were less involved	2	0	0

Table 2

Memorial Committee Members
Question 2 Responses: Points of Agreement

Content of Response (<i>N</i> = 3)	Supported	Not Supported	Not Addressed
No formal selection process	3	0	0
All interested invited to attend planning mtgs	3	0	0
50-75 initial committee members	2	0	1
Up to the dedication, 12-15 members still attending committee mtgs	2	1	0
Approximately 20 members <i>stayed with us for entire process</i>	1	2	0
6-8 members involved in day-to-day business	1	0	2
Those who quit generally left because task was difficult & required large time commitment	1	0	2

Responses to Question 3

Please explain the fundraising and how donations were handled. All three committee members mentioned the large influx of donations that occurred at the beginning of the tragedy. These funds were sent to an existing non-profit organization for tax purposes. The donations were logged and thank you cards were sent. One member stated that “Over 9 years we received over 5000+ individual donations.” Two of the respondents mentioned that fundraising became more difficult after other national disasters. There were large fundraising events such as a dinner where President Clinton was the speaker as well as numerous local activities. Two members stressed the importance of advertising and letting the public know what they could do to help. As one participant commented, “In the big picture, we always felt as though one or two people would write that ‘big’ check and then we would have accomplished our goals. But in reality, it

was those in our own local community who wrote the small checks and helped the community build the Memorial.” For more information refer to Table 3.

Responses to Question 4

Regarding the Columbine Memorial, explain the key components of the planning and decision making process. All three agreed that consultation with the families of the victims was crucial. Three initial designs were rejected by the victims’ families, and the final design was a mixture of the initial three designs. One member mentioned, “Planning involved keeping in mind the pyramid triangle of important people.” The pyramid of importance that placed the wishes of the families of the deceased first, followed by the injured and their families, the students, and the community. One member reported that decisions were made at a subcommittee level and reported to the larger committee for a vote. The person reported that “it worked very well and we rarely had any issues or conflicts.” Another member mentioned that decisions were often made after “lengthy debate and discussion amongst committee members,” It was also noted that decisions were affected by funding, and the original design had to be scaled back. For more information see Table 4.

Responses to Question 5

How did financing affect the process of planning and ultimately selecting the design? All three members noted that the design had to be scaled back when they realized that fundraising would not reach the cost of the original design. One member commented that the “initial design was way too elaborate and too costly.” Another member stated,

When we realized that our fundraising would not meet that funding level, we asked for the Memorial design to be scaled back-which is what we have today. The ‘families’ of

the deceased played a major role in design selection – as their opinions were greatly valued.

It was noted that it became more difficult to raise money after natural disasters such as tsunamis and hurricanes became the focus of national donations. For more information refer to Table 5.

Table 3

Fund Raising and Donations
Question 3 Responses: Points of Agreement

Content of Response (<i>N</i> = 3)	Supported	Not Supported	Not Addressed
Immediate influx of donations from individuals & corporations	3	0	0
Funds collected & channeled through local Foothills Foundation (non-profit organization)	1	0	2
5000+ individual donations logged into data base & thank you cards sent	1	0	2
Fund raising slowed down over time because of focus on other disasters: 9/11 & Hurricane Katrina	2	0	1
Fundraising dinner with President Clinton	2	0	1
Numerous local (small) fundraising activities: car washes, bake sales, & (larger) fund raisers such as golf tournaments & Columbine pin sales	2	0	1
Advertising “educating the public”	2	0	1
Unsuccessful attempt to hire professional fund raiser	1	0	2

Table 4

Key Components of Planning, Fund Raising, & Donations
Question 4 Responses: Points of Agreement

Content of Response (N = 3)	Supported	Not Supported	Not Addressed
Surveys distributed, soliciting feedback about what to include in memorial	1	0	2
Designs submitted from several firms	2	0	1
Pyramid of importance: families of deceased, injured & their families, students, & community	1	0	2
Decisions made at sub-committee level & presented to full committee for vote	1	0	2
Decisions made after lengthy debate	1	1	1
Rarely any conflict	1	1	1
Consulted families of victims	3	0	0
Design firm held public mtgs	1	0	2
Initial 3 designs rejected by victims' families	1	0	2
Final design evolved into combination of 3 designs	1	0	2
Design accepted after 18 months mtgs & modifications	1	0	2
Cost of original design, \$2.4 million, scaled back to \$1.5 million	1	0	2

Table 5

*Effect of Finances on Process of Planning & Selecting Design
Question 5 Responses: Points of Agreement*

Content of Response (<i>N</i> = 3)	Supported	Not Supported	Not Addressed
Realized fundraising not reaching cost of original design, so scaled back	3	0	0
Funding was main reason memorial took nearly 8 yrs to complete	1	0	2
Families of deceased played major role in design selection	1	0	2
Nationally, diversion of funding to other tragedies (tsunami, hurricanes) turned focus to local funding focus	1	0	2

Responses to Question 6

In planning a memorial, considering the emotional needs of students and families, what special considerations were implemented on their behalf? The pyramid of priorities was mentioned by two of the respondents. In any decision the families of the victims were the primary focus, then the injured and their families, the school staff and students, and the community. Two of the members noted that their focus on student's feedback decreased over time as the original students graduated and the committee no longer had contact with many of them. As one respondent explained, "Because there was no formal group of former students, after the initial surveys distributed to them, there was limited access to them as a group per se." One member mentioned that the memorial was made handicap accessible to accommodate those who had been injured. "Instead of stairs to the top of Rebel Hill (the high point of the Memorial), we designed a sidewalk around the outside to the top." See Table 6 for additional information.

Table 6

Planning: Special Considerations for Emotional Needs of Students & Families
Question 6 Responses: Points of Agreement

Content of Response (N = 3)	Supported	Not Supported	Not Addressed
Handicap accessibility- sidewalk instead of stairs	1	0	2
Priority pyramid: (1) Families of victims were the primary focus, (2) Injured & their families, (3) School staff & students, & (4) Community	2	0	1
Initial surveys distributed for student feedback	1	0	2
Focus on students' feedback decreased over time. Limited contact with students after they graduated.	2	0	1

Responses to Question 7

Now that the memorial is completed, how has the community responded? All three respondents agreed that the feedback has been largely positive. Two of them mentioned that there had been many visitors, and they provided various examples of positive feedback such as beautiful, meaningful, and appropriate. One participant stated, "Visits to the site are more than what we expected and community groups have come forward to assist with general maintenance." Another member noted, "We continue to receive many compliments from Memorial visitors about how touching it is and how meaningful and appropriately it was designed." One member also stated that the completion of the memorial was "another step toward closure of the healing process." For more information see Table 7.

Table 7

Community Response to Memorial
Question 7 Responses: Points of Agreement

Content of Response (<i>N</i> = 3)	Supported	Not Supported	Not Addressed
Many visitors	2	0	1
Very positive feedback:	3	0	0
(a) Beautiful	2	0	1
(b) Meaningful	2	0	1
(c) Peaceful	1	0	2
(d) Appropriate	2	0	1
(e) Simple	1	0	2
(f) Touching	1	0	2
Memorial was <i>another step toward closure of the healing process</i>	1	0	2

Responses to Question 8

Now that the memorial is completed, how have students responded? Two of the members felt that overall the students' responses had been positive and supportive. One member felt that there was no unified student reaction, "Each student had a very unique and individual experience... and has followed a very unique and individual path to healing since that time." Some students "have been very appreciative . . . and others don't want to have anything to do with it." Committee members also mentioned potential benefits of the memorial including "a peaceful place to work through their troubled personal issues" and the public now has a place to visit that will hopefully reduce disruption to the school itself. As one member explained, "The school and current students were very helpful in some of our fundraising efforts. Probably the biggest change is now the public has a place to visit rather than disrupting current students and faculty by trying to gain access to the school." See Table 8 for more information.

Responses to Question 9

What lessons did you learn that would be helpful to others in a similar situation-- planning a school memorial? The committee members had varied responses to this open-ended question. One respondent explained, "I learned many valuable lessons over that time. Some were more positive than others. Some were disheartening. Some were uplifting. Some were down right painful." However, all three made mention of the importance of flexibility and the ability to compromise. One member observed, "You have to learn to compromise. Not everyone is going to agree on everything, and you have to keep sight of the overall goal." Other responses mentioned by two respondents include the advice to be aware of the motives of those involved in the project, and also to be aware of how that motivation can change over time.

Table 8

*Student Response to Memorial
Question 8 Responses: Points of Agreement*

Content of Response ($N = 3$)	Supported	Not Supported	Not Addressed
Unified overall, good, positive, supportive	2	1	0
(a) Peaceful	1	0	2
(b) Unique & varied	1	0	2
(c) Appreciative, thankful	1	0	2
(d) Quietly reflective	1	0	2
Individual, varied, polar responses: No unified reaction. Some appreciative & some want nothing to do with it	1	2	0
Peaceful place to visit and work through issues in time of need	1	0	2
Public has a place, reduces disruption at the school	1	0	2

Another consideration noted was that there is no specific time frame for completing a memorial, and some things may take longer than expected. One respondent stated, “We got a lot of criticism for how long it took, but the length of the process was a function of the design coordination, meeting needs of the families, and slow progress on fundraising.” Two members also recognized the uniqueness of each tragedy, and that what worked in one situation may not work well in another. One participant explained, “I think what we all learned is that there is not a standard process or an ‘instruction manual’ for this kind of project. Each community and circumstance is different and the emotional and practical needs that required attention were ever-changing.”

Table 9

Lessons Learned in Planning the Columbine Memorial: Suggestions to Others
Question 9 Responses: Points of Agreement

Content of Response (<i>N</i> = 3)	Supported	Not Supported	Not Addressed
MOTIVES: Be aware of participants' differing motives Be aware - your motives may change	2	0	1
FUNDRAISING: Most difficult task Channel continuous effort into fundraising Encourage those who wish to become involved Support small fundraisers as well as large	1	0	2
APPROVAL: Challenging to coordinate & get families' approval on different issues.	1	0	2
DETAILS: Planning requires attention to details.	1	0	2
FLEXIBILITY & ABILITY TO COMPROMISE: Be prepared for the unexpected. Must be sensitive to diverse opinions and needs.	3	0	0
PATIENCE: Have patience in the planning process.	1	0	2
NEVER QUIT: Finish what you start.	1	0	2
UNIQUENESS: Each tragedy is unique. No instruction manual, no guide book.	2	0	1
TIME FRAME: Criticized for setting a time frame. Each situation's time frame is different. No time frame that you have to follow.	2	0	1
SUCCESS: The group reached their goal.	1	0	2
LEADERSHIP: Be directive. Give directions, let people know how they can help, ask for assistance.	1	0	2
MAKING A DIFFERENCE: One person makes a difference. Though not glamorous, small efforts, often unnoticed, get the work done. A "small group of committed individuals can make a huge difference in our world."	1	0	2

Another member noted that “there isn’t a ‘guide book’ that one can follow. There will be missteps Just know that each and everything you do will eventually get you to your goal—good and bad. As long as you keep trying and maintain the integrity of the purpose of the project, you will succeed and others will help you do just that Every future Memorial will need to find its own way in its own time.” See Table 9 for more information.

The Columbine Memorial: Insights from Publications and Internet Resources

In addition to the survey results provided by committee members, newspaper articles and internet resources were also reviewed to provide additional information and insight. Information from these resources is summarized in the following sections, highlighting major ingredients to consider when planning a school-related memorial.

Littleton, Colorado

To better understand this tragedy, it is important to view this information in the context of the community. Columbine High School serves over 1,600 students, grades 9-12 (Columbine High School Profile, 2005). Part of Jefferson County Public Schools, the high school is located almost 4 miles outside the city limits of Littleton, Colorado. Based on Littleton’s community website [<http://www.littletongov.org/>], information in Table 10 compares Littleton’s demographic information to the U.S. 2000 Census data. Overall, Littleton is primarily Caucasian and considered a fairly religious community. The city, a suburb located south of Denver, is home to approximately 40,000.

Religious Component of Memorial

The memorializing of victims of school tragedies is a sensitive subject. As the Columbine community moved from the spontaneous temporary memorial phase into more intransient memorials, one of the more delicate issues to be addressed was how to incorporate religious

beliefs into a public school setting. Of course, the difficulty came in defining appropriate boundaries regarding the separation of church and state, yet permitting individuals and groups to utilize faith-based strategies for coping with death and loss. Littleton, Colorado is a community with a strong religious component. Stemming from their religious beliefs, families and students desired to support others with faith-related expressions. In displaying temporary and more permanent school-based memorials, religion quickly became an issue.

Table 10

2000 U.S. Census Demographics: U.S. and Littleton, Colorado

	Self-Identified as Religious ^a	Race	Home Language other than English	Individuals Below Poverty
United States	50%	75.0% Caucasian 12.5% Hispanic	17.9%	12.4%
Littleton, CO	58%	91.8% Caucasian 8.4% Hispanic	9.0%	6.0%

Note.^a Percentage describing U.S. religion is based on Robinson's data (2001) and Grossman (2002).

More specifically, soon after the Columbine tragedy, the school permitted students and families to memorialize the victims by decorating ceramic tiles. Once completed, these tiles were placed in the school's hallway. The tiles were anticipated as a helpful support in the school community's grieving process. General guidelines were given to those preparing these tiles: "no specific references to the shooting, no student names, and no potentially offensive religious symbols or words" (Mears, 2003). However, when parents initially objected to some types of statements yet permitted some religious statements and drawings on the tiles, the school agreed to allow religious references. Later, the school changed its decision and opted to remove the

religious themes, because the tiles were viewed as being too imposing, ever present, too much of a reminder for students. The tiles were on the hallway walls, school administrators believed these high traffic areas of the school were not the appropriate place for the religiously oriented tiles. Feeling confused, hurt, and angry, the families of some of the victims sued the school for violating their first amendment rights (“Columbine memorials spark families’ lawsuit,” 1999; Mears).

Initially, a federal judge ruled in favor of the families, permitting the families and students to keep the tiles in the school hallways. However, that initial verdict was later overturned by the 10th Circuit Court of Appeals. Attempting to take the case to a higher court, the families hoped to have the decision over-turned. In 2003, the Supreme Court refused to hear the families’ appeal. In favor of the school administrators and against the families, the verdict stands. The school is allowed to decide what will or will not be displayed (Mears, 2003). This legal battle set the precedence for more clearly defining schools’ power. Another lesson from this experience is that districts should define guidelines for all school displays, not just those associated with memorials. Having a set of guidelines and sticking to those guidelines reduces confusion and feelings of persecution when situations similar to Columbine challenge the established set of rules.

Reminders of the Tragedy

Another important point of consideration is how reminders of the events can affect students returning to school after the tragedy. For students, the initial challenge was *taking back our school*, rising above the horrendous violation perpetrated against them. However the more difficult long term challenge is returning to normalcy, *school as usual*. Betty Fitzpatrick, director of health services in Jefferson County Public Schools, reported that eight months after the

shootings, of the total 2,000 students enrolled, the number of students on Homebound Support increased from 11 to 30 (Johnson, 2000). For some students, returning to school meant returning to a place associated with traumatic memories.

However, even though the religious statements on the tiles were not permitted in the school halls, other religious reminders of the April 20, 1999 events are displayed in the school. A plaque in the school's office states "God Weeps Over Columbine." Additionally, an office clock is permanently set displaying 11:10, the moment the attacks began. Because school leaders anticipated that these reminders in high traffic areas might be upsetting to students, these objects were placed in the school's office area (Associated Press, 2003).

Functional Memorials: The Atrium and Library

Some community members were anxious for the school to return to normal as quickly as possible. However, it was challenging to know the best way to accomplish this goal. One of the first projects was to replace the school library, the room where many of the killings took place. HOPE (Healing of People Everywhere) was formed by the families of the victims of Columbine to try to bring some healing to the community. Within the first six months, fund raising for a new library and Atrium gathered \$3.1 million. The ceiling of the Atrium is a mural of a variety of native Colorado trees painted by artist Virginia Wright-Frierson. Four larger central canvasses and 16 other paintings are suspended from the ceiling. The Atrium was designed by architect J.D. Nelson, and construction was completed prior to students returning to school in August, 2000.

The sentiment behind the Atrium is captured in the words of Dawn Anna whose daughter Lauren Townsend was killed in the library, "We wanted heads to be lifted, not hung, wondering 'where did that child die?' When you walk into the atrium, you have to walk with your head held

up. The entire room lifts your spirits.” Information and pictures of the atrium are located on the following website: [<http://www.hopecolumbine.org/pictures.html>]. In addition to the atrium, the new library was built with donations from more than 4,600 individuals, as well as labor and materials donated from many businesses. The library honors the 12 students and 1 teacher who were killed. The HOPE Columbine Memorial Library was opened June 9, 2001.

Columbine High School

In a much larger sense, Columbine High School itself has turned into a sort of memorial. As in many of the previous school tragedies, the community felt there was a need to rebuild so that students would not be needlessly traumatized by returning to the scene of so much bloodshed. The library and the atrium are functional memorials within the school, providing a comfortable place of beauty for individuals to remember. Additionally, Columbine’s football field was renamed to honor a victim, plaques honor other victims, and one teacher still keeps a picture of his slain colleague on his wall (Johnson & Kelley, 2006).

However, in many ways, Columbine High School is trying to move on. Because of the vast media coverage the shooting received, Columbine became a household word around the world. Years later, Columbine High school remains a tourist attraction: Individuals drive up in front of the building to take pictures. This became part of the impetus for a larger community memorial away from the school. The community memorial will hopefully allow a gathering place for the general public, a place to remember and express respects away from the school, giving the school and students privacy and letting the school be a school.

Columbine has turned into a tourist attraction, and it's not fair to the school, said one of the unlucky ones, Tom Mauser, whose son Daniel died in the library. That's why he welcomed a memorial near the school that focuses on the victims and the joy they

brought their families. 'I think it's indeed needed to relieve that school of the gawkers and the attention, so I think this [Columbine Memorial] is great,' Mauser said. (Bartels, 2007)

The permanent memorial is where Foote's four traditional responses to sites of violence begin to define themselves and how the Columbine event will be viewed (Foote, 2003).

Columbine is an interesting mix of these four traditional responses. The library where most of the killings occurred has been rebuilt and is one example of a functional memorial within the school. The school is still in use, and recently a nearby permanent memorial to the victims of Columbine was dedicated to transition from *designation* to probable *sanctification*. The location of the memorial is in a field adjacent to the high school. It is hoped that the memorial will allow people a place to remember, yet will be separate from the school environment in order to protect the feelings of the current students of Columbine.

Columbine's Permanent Memorial

The Columbine Memorial Committee, with the assistance of the Foothills Foundation managing fundraising and financial accounting, developed a permanent community memorial. The official memorial is located outside Littleton, Colorado city limits in Clement Park, next to Columbine High School. The memorial is on the west side of the school and the east side of the park bordering *Rebel Hill*. The memorial occupies a little over an acre of ground with the central area covering approximately 27,000 sq. ft. [<http://www.columbinememorial.org/FAQ.asp>]. Ground was broken on June 16, 2006.

The families of the victims of the shootings, the survivors and their families, past and present high school students, and the community as a whole were involved in the designing of the memorial. This project has been the culmination of years of gathering opinions, planning, fundraising, and construction. Because of the widespread effect of the calamity and the desire to

aided community catharsis, careful consideration was given to include the community in the memorial planning process. The four levels of involvement in decision making and design began with the families of those who were killed. The second tier consisted of the injured victims and their families. The third included survey data collected from past and present high school students, staff, and faculty. The fourth level included community feedback through surveys and an open house. Many memorial designs are a closed process. Columbine provides an important example of how an open process evolved and aided in community healing.

Memorial Committee

A memorial committee consisted of volunteers, including students, parents, faculty, and community members. The committee sought to create a memorial that would

. . . evoke feelings of compassion and encourage visitors to seek, in their own lives, meaning and understanding from this tragedy. It should speak of the broad and far-reaching spiritual reactions of the community and nation so evident in the wake of the attack. (Columbine Memorial Website, n.d.)

Memorial Committee's Goals

While honoring those who died as well as the victims who survived, the memorial also sought to pay tribute to faculty, rescue workers, and those in the community who put themselves at risk to help evacuate the school, calm the victims, and treated the injured. After years of dialogue between the design team, the planning committee, and other community groups, four overarching important considerations emerged. As stated on the Columbine Memorial website, the committee's four main goals were:

- Create a respectful place where family members, members of the community and visitors can come to gain an understanding of the innocent victims of Columbine.

- Create a memorial with content and purpose 100% derived from members of the Columbine community, and keeping with the scale, materials and natural forms found in the Columbine area.
- Recognize and honor the deceased, the injured, the survivors and the community members.
- Incorporate the Columbine "never forgotten" ribbon in the concept design for the memorial. In the years since the tragedy, the Columbine ribbon has become a symbol of community unification and strength. This specific ribbon, designed in the Community will be re-created in the paving or landscape patterns of the memorial.

[<http://www.columbinememorial.org/Overview.asp>]

Design of Columbine Memorial

The memorial contains an inner *Ring of Remembrance* that is etched with the words of family and friends to honor the deceased. The outer *Ring of Healing* contains the words of the injured, the students, the staff, and others in the community that describe changes and healing that have taken place, as well as hope for the future. A ribbon design with the words *Never Forgotten* links the two rings together and “serve as a symbolic link between the community and the deceased” [<http://www.columbinememorial.org/Overview.asp>].

The original memorial plans including a 10-foot-high water wall and the use of granite were downsized when the committee reduced the budget from \$2.5 million to \$1.5 million. After the tragic events of September 11, 2001, it became more difficult to raise funds for the Columbine Memorial as the focus of the nation had shifted (Johnson & Kelley, 2006). However, the funding for the simplified version of the memorial was accumulated and the Columbine Memorial was dedicated on September 21, 2007.

Columbine Memorial and the Tasks of Grieving

The memorial planning process involves several of Wolfelt's *Six Tasks of Grieving* (2002). (Information on Wolfelt and the six tasks of grief are listed in the literature review section of this thesis). A memorial is one way to assist individuals in facing the reality of death. The National Association of School Psychologists (NASP, 2002) offers guidelines to "proceed slowly and involve students, staff, families, and the community in your planning and decision making." They pointed out that the planning and construction of the Oklahoma City memorial took five years. This reiterates similar experiences of the Columbine Memorial Committee who recognized that patience was a key factor in the process and that there should be no rushing to meet timelines. The process involved in planning the memorial is one way people can search for closure as they acknowledge the reality of their loss. Grieving takes time.

The memorial planning process is also a way to meet the second task of grieving: to face the pain with support. NASP (2002) offers guidelines to "focus on the needs and goals related to the students, and include parents and community members in activities as appropriate." The Columbine Memorial Planning Committee found that an open process that allowed for anyone who desired to participate worked for them. Memorial committees should acknowledge that emotions may run high in the planning process.

The third task is to adapt a proper perspective and build memorials of deceased. NASP (2002) guidelines state the importance of being sensitive to cultural differences when planning a memorial. They also suggest that the memorial not be an expression of anger toward the perpetrators. Each situation is unique and there is no one set of guidelines that will fit every situation. As the Columbine Memorial Committee members mentioned, flexibility is crucial.

Everyone will bring a different perspective and experience to the table. Though everyone may not agree with all viewpoints, each viewpoint must be validated, considered, and respected.

Other considerations for schools and memorials include the scale of the memorial. Large scale memorials for the death of one student may be difficult to maintain on equal footing for future losses. Long term maintenance for the memorial is another consideration.

More of Wolfelt's tasks are to redefine self in absence of the deceased and to find new meanings in one's life after the death (2002). School officials can be sensitive to developmental considerations as students try to redefine themselves. Memorials must emphasize hope and recovery. Schools must carefully select a location for their memorial. Memorials located in high traffic areas may be upsetting for students to confront on a daily basis. Memorials should not be *in your face*. Students should be invited to participate, never forced or made to feel obligated (Heath, Bingham, et al., 2008). Each person experiences grief differently and schools need to be sensitive to individuals preferences. Participation in memorials should be voluntary.

Controversy of the Post Dedication

Another controversy surrounding the Columbine memorial has to do with freedom of expression. The families were allowed to write a tribute to be engraved on the inner walls of the memorial. However, the words of a father of one of the victims were somewhat divisive. The following words were written by Daniel's mother and father:

DANIEL LEE ROHRBOUGH

March 2, 1984 - April 20, 1999

[NOTE: This initial part was written by Daniel's mother.]

What will the world miss?

A precious gift from God with an engaging smile and beautiful blue eyes that would light up the room, sensitive and caring, always quick with a comforting hug. A funny kid with an infectious laugh and a quick come-back, so full of questions and wanting to know how things work. Family was important to you and always included in your life. Just beginning your journey with so much to learn, yet you taught us so much. We miss you.

[NOTE: The following part was written by Daniel's father.]

"Dad, I have a question." Why?

My son in a Nation that legalized the killing of innocent children in the womb; in a County where authorities would lie and cover up what they knew and what they did; in a Godless school system your life was taken? Dan I'm sorry. "I love you dad I'll see you tomorrow." 7:00 p.m., April 19, 1999. "There is no peace," says the Lord, "for the wicked." Isaiah 48:22 . ("In memory," 2007).

The inscription is part of a conversation that Brian Rohrbough had with his son in 1998 after the school killings in Jonesborough, Arkansas. The other part is the imagined answer that Rohrbough would offer to his son now (Vaughan, 2007).

Rohrbough knew that his comments would incite controversy, and it has. However, the feedback seems to be mixed. Some people express disapproval to use the memorial to make any kind of political statement. However, others believe that Rohrbough should be able to freely express himself as he sees fit (Gathright, 2007). The engravings on the memorial for other students contain religious references and scriptural citations. However, they have not sparked the same amount of debate as Rohrbough's comments. (See Appendix D for a complete list of the memorial text.)

As Columbine High school tries to move out from under the shadow of tragedy that has made it arguably the most famous high school in America and a household name, it is important to remember the words of Patrick Ireland, one of the wounded, who spoke at the Columbine Memorial dedication: "The word Columbine is not to be used as a comparative for all things bad It should be used as a word of strength and description of hope and courage" (Bartels, 2007).

DISCUSSION

Basic considerations when responding to a school crisis include providing accurate information, avoiding judgment and blame, empowering individuals, providing an outlet for emotional expression, and providing ongoing support (Heath, Bingham, et al., 2008). Moving beyond the initial trauma, planning, defining, building, and dedicating a memorial is one option for a school community to address and meet these needs. This thesis focused on the feedback from the leaders of the Columbine Memorial Planning Committee. Placing this feedback in the context of previous memorials, both public and school related, provided additional insight into this sparsely researched area. Helping children and school communities cope with tragedies demands further investigation and validation of efforts to plan and build memorials to best support children and schools.

Caveats

The Columbine Memorial Committee leaders emphasized that other communities impacted by another type of tragedy will have different needs and different ways of honoring and remembering loss. Thus the information they shared must be understood in the context of Columbine High School and Littleton, Colorado. Bottom-line, their recommendations based on their experience may not fully generalize to other situations.

Therefore, the purpose of this thesis is not to dictate a specific set of rigid instructions, but rather to provide a resource for others, points to consider, and ideas to review. Additionally their input may provide words of support and encouragement for others facing the seemingly overwhelming task of memorializing heroes, honoring loss, and providing a historical context for a school tragedy.

Suggestions for Memorial Planning Committees

The strongest suggestion emerging from the Columbine Memorial committee members' responses is the importance of flexibility, changing and adapting to consider various needs, opinions, and difficulties that arise. In particular, the leaders pointed out the specific need to be open and flexible in meeting the community's needs, carefully considering multiple points of view: students, teachers, families, and the community.

Encouraging Spontaneous Memorials

One of the key recommendations for schools immediately following a tragedy is to "empower teachers and staff to assist students" (Heath, Dean, & Bingham, 2008). Schools are advised to provide a variety of activities to meet students' emotional needs. One such activity is permitting and encouraging the formation of a spontaneous memorial. This invites students to participate in doing something to express their feelings. The spontaneous memorials are a creative outlet for students and adults, an opportunity to give, express concerns, and communicate grief. Children of all ages are invited to participate. The spontaneous memorial is highly visible and grows with children's notes, poems, pictures, teddy bears, flowers, and other offerings.

When compared to spontaneous memorials, permanent memorials require long term planning and are confined by many more restrictions: time, fundraising, budgets, building code restrictions, school guidelines, long-term upkeep, designs, etc. These are adult worries, and adults typically bear the burden of these responsibilities. While the adults should take the onus of the task, students should be able to have a part in the procedure. The planning meetings can be a forum for student expression and support. They can provide a specific location to gather to remember. This can be helpful during the grieving process. However, participation in memorials

should be optional. The participation by students need not be limited to the memorial planning process. Some memorials have found it helpful to include activities that children can participate in, folding cranes, making rubbing of names, drawing pictures etc. (Heath, Dean, & Bingham, 2008.)

Columbine students were involved in the initial memorial process by setting up a spontaneous memorial in Clement Park shortly after the shootings. They also expressed a desire for a more lasting memorial. Student input was solicited from surveys asking for their ideas and preferences in designing the memorial. Students were also involved in design meetings and were able to be involved in the memorial committee.

Prioritizing Needs

From the start, the Columbine Committee considered who they were planning a memorial for, designating a pyramid of priorities. The committee placed the needs of the families of the deceased first, followed by the injured and their families, the students and faculty, the community, and the nation. Because of the length of time, almost eight years, in completing the memorial, student feedback dwindled as students graduated and dispersed. In fact, as students graduated, the committee lost contact with most of the students and basically any feedback on their part was self-initiated. However, the students' suggestions and preferences were recorded and carefully considered as the memorial plans evolved.

Forming a Committee

One of the purposes of having a memorial is to provide opportunities for people to express their feelings. The Columbine Memorial Committee members were not "selected," rather an open invitation was offered for anyone who wished to be involved. The eight years of planning required dedication and perseverance to see the process through from start to finish.

One of the committee leaders commented that over time the committee became a “loosely structured group representing various aspects of the community.” However, during this eight-year period, a core group of individuals continued to meet once every 30-60 days, discussing ideas and monitoring progress on the memorial plans.

Expanding Beyond the Temporary Memorial

Though the spontaneous memorial was immediately evidenced within hours of the shootings, the initial process of planning the permanent Columbine Memorial began within the first six weeks following the tragedy. Local Jefferson County (Colorado) government officials initiated the process, responding to public requests and an influx of monetary donations. Additionally, as evidenced at Columbine, similar to other community and school-based tragedies, the desire for a permanent memorial became apparent as the spontaneous memorial flourished.

Fundraising

Another key factor to consider when planning a permanent memorial is fundraising. After Columbine, donations flooded in from across Colorado, the nation, and the world. In 2004, a successful fundraising dinner featured former President Clinton as the key speaker. However, fundraising did not provide a consistent influx of money and plans were difficult to project without a definite amount of money that could be realistically projected. The final accepted plans were tapered back from the originally projected \$2.4 million and kept within the newly revised \$1.5 million budget. The decreased budget resulted when fundraising dwindled in 2004 and early 2005. To reach the \$1.5 million budget, a resurgence of soliciting funds necessitated local projects, including car washes, bake sales, selling decorative Columbine pins, and fundraising golf tournaments. The final \$150,000 was received from an anonymous donor. Also a budgetary

consideration, the committee planned for ongoing maintenance of the memorial by organizing community volunteer groups.

In this age of advanced technology and media, the story of Columbine's tragedy instantly impacted people around the world, sensitizing them to one school's tragedy. Millions expressed concern and wanted to help. However, those outside the community were unsure of exactly what they could do to help. As one committee member stated, you cannot just assume that people will know what to do or how they might help. They need direction, they need to be told. Planning and funding a permanent memorial may be one way that a community chooses to help the healing process.

Avoiding Deadlines and Rushing: The Importance of Patience

Another key ingredient in planning a memorial is patience. Columbine Memorial Committee leaders emphasized that the planning process was not rigidly restricted with deadlines. In fact the needs of those involved and challenges that arose made it literally impossible to keep the planning within a specified time frame. Each tragedy and subsequent planning for a permanent memorial is unique. For instance, Virginia Tech's planning for their permanent memorial faces a different set of restraints and needs, necessitating a different time frame than Columbine. Patience is key to accommodating the desires of those impacted by the disaster, as well as riding out potential difficulties with fundraising, the ebb and flow of community response, and construction delays.

Feedback

Now, nine months after the dedication of the Columbine Memorial, feedback has been varied. The committee leaders report that the site has had more visitors than expected. Comments also include that the site is "beautiful" and "peaceful."

Student Feedback

One committee member pointed out that student reactions are individual and as unique as the various experiences they had on the day of the tragedy. Because students who were in high school at the time of the tragedy have graduated and dispersed, their feedback is limited to those who have visited or those who stayed local. Some students have been supportive of the memorial, even participating on the planning committee. Other students have chosen not to participate.

The current students of Columbine have also been involved in the memorial process and fundraising efforts. As one committee leader indicated, the permanent memorial now provides a place to remember and reflect, separated from the school. The “public has a place to visit without disrupting current students and faculty by trying to gain access to the school.”

Words of Encouragement

Columbine Memorial Committee members were asked what advice they would give to other schools facing a similar task. As one member expressed it, “Every situation will be unique and what worked for the Columbine Memorial may not work in another instance. Every group will consist of a unique blend of talents, motives for involvement, and a unique set of needs. Every future Memorial will need to find its own way in its own time.” Key points to remember are to have patience, be willing to compromise, have a flexible timeline that meets the needs of those involved, do not become discouraged, learn from missteps, keep moving forward, and you will reach your goal.

Limitations

The limitations of this study should be acknowledged. Only the perspectives of three committee members and the previously published opinions of others in the community were

considered. The experiences of the Columbine Memorial are unique to a specific tragedy and embedded in the culture of their community. Therefore, the Columbine Memorial Committee leaders' input may not generalize to other schools and other types of tragedies. While generalization is a potential weakness of this type of research (Giorgi 2006), this study seeks to provide preliminary information and guidelines that others facing similar situations can use or disregard as needed.

Conclusion

The Columbine Memorial was intended to be the culminating event of an 8 year process as the community struggled to find an appropriate way to memorialize the victims. Even after all this time and struggle, the controversy to define a national tragedy continues. The memorial will stand as a monument to the 13 individuals who lost their lives. However, it also has a role as a monument to a community trying to define the experience and make sense of these events that forever altered their lives. While the memorial does not provide the definitive answers that many people may seek, perhaps the purpose of a memorial is not to provide answers, but to stand as a reminder to continue asking important questions and to *never forget*.

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APPENDIX A

LETTER OF CONSENT

Please sign and return this Consent Letter & Questionnaires to Melissa Allen Heath melissa_allen@byu.edu Office 801-422-1235 Home 801-491-8386, fax 801-422-0198, Dept. Counseling Psych/Special Ed. 340-K MCKB Brigham Young University Provo, UT 84602-5091

Dear Participant,

We request your participation in a study examining the arrangements and planning for school-based memorials following a tragedy or disaster. This study is a graduate thesis project. As part of this project, I am summarizing information about the Columbine Memorial. This information is available to the general public, including news articles, internet web site information, and publications and articles regarding the Columbine tragedy and memorial. My purpose is to determine some basic guidelines to assist schools in better meeting student and family needs following a tragedy. Rather than depending solely on published information, your input is critical in gathering accurate information and understanding the complexity of planning such an important task. Because of your involvement with the Columbine Memorial Planning Committee, we are eager to share your wisdom and insights, providing sound advice to others who may face a similar task.

If you chose to participate, at your convenience, we can interview you via phone, e-mail, or mail a hard copy to your address. The interview questions will require approximately 30 minutes (or less) of your time. With your permission, we will integrate your perceptions, even direct quotes (with your permission), into the final write-up. Respecting your privacy and agency, you have the right to discontinue participation and withdraw your input at any point. However, we encourage your participation because we greatly value your experience and are eager to hear your perceptions regarding this important task.

This survey is not expected to cause harm or undue distress; however, you may find this survey thought provoking, possibly eliciting grief and memories associated with the Columbine tragedy. If you need or would appreciate a follow-up discussion with a licensed psychologist experienced in crisis intervention counseling, please contact Melissa Allen Heath (contact information is listed below). A professional counselor's contact information will be provided as needed.

While this study will ask minimal demographic information, confidentiality will be maintained throughout the survey. Although completion of this survey will indicate your voluntary consent to participate in this study, we appreciate your signed consent to indicate we may use your direct quote (as a member of the Columbine Memorial Planning Committee, not identified as a specific person).

_____ I agree to participate in an interview or questionnaire, responding to list of questions.

_____ I do **not** agree to participate in an interview or to complete a questionnaire.

_____ I permit my survey responses to be integrated into this thesis project (and future publications), even using direct quotes. To ensure accuracy, I will review and approve my direct quotes prior to this project's completion.

_____ I do **not** permit my survey responses (direct quotes) to be integrated into this thesis project.

_____ I understand that I will only be identified as a member of the Columbine Memorial Project. However, my name and personal information (address and contact information) will **not** be used in the thesis, presentations, or articles published from this research.

This research was reviewed and approved by the McKay School of Education, subcommittee of Brigham Young University Institutional Review Board (IRB). If you have questions or concerns, please contact the primary investigator, graduate student Rebecka Bingham (contact information listed below) or the faculty advisor, Melissa Allen Heath (contact information is listed below). If you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, please contact Dr. Chris Dromey at 801-422-6461 or e-mail Christopher-dromey@byu.edu. Or write to his office at 133 TLRB, Brigham Young University, Provo Utah 84602. You may also contact the Brigham Young University Institutional Review Board (IRB) office: Please Email the ORCA Office: xorcastu@byu.edu or call the IRB staff: 801-422-3841.

Rebecka Bingham, School Psychology Graduate student
Brigham Young University
RebeckaBingham758@hotmail.com
801-830-0694

Melissa Allen Heath, Ph.D. <melissa_allen@byu.edu>
Office 801-422-1235 Home 801-491-8386 fax 801-422-0198
School Psychology Program
Dept. Counseling Psych/Special Ed.
340-K MCKB
Provo, UT 84602-5093

APPENDIX B

QUESTIONNAIRE/SURVEY

My name is Rebecka Bingham, a school psychology intern from Brigham Young University. My contact information is listed at the bottom of this questionnaire. This research has been approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Brigham Young University. The purpose of this interview is to investigate underlying factors in planning, developing, and finally completing the permanent Columbine Memorial. As a member of the Memorial Planning Committee, you have unique insights that will assist others responsible for planning school memorials. This interview consists of 9 general questions and will take approximately 20 to 30 minutes, depending on the length of your responses. Because of your personal connection with this disaster, you may experience emotions associated with the trauma, particularly sadness and anger. At any point during or following the interview, you have the option of stopping the interview or electing not to participate. If you desire to continue this discussion or follow-up with a discussion regarding your concerns, I can provide you with the contact information of a licensed psychologist (UT) who specializes in children's grief (Melissa Allen Heath 801-422-1235 or 801-491-8386). Your comments will not be connected to your name. Interview notes and records with identifying information will be locked in a file. Participant's identity will be removed from individual's questionnaires. Following the completion of the thesis, all identifying information will be shredded and destroyed.

Thank you for helping me with this important project.

NOTE: For those who are very busy and only want to share a minimal amount of information, I would appreciate your response to one question:

What lessons did you learn that would be helpful to others in a similar situation--planning a school memorial?

=====

_____ Age: (optional)

_____ Gender: (optional)

General role on committee: _____

If in a lead role (chairperson, director, or involved in financial responsibilities, complete questions 1, 2, & 3.

Otherwise, start on question #4.

1. In regard to the Columbine Memorial, explain how the memorial planning process began? Who or what were the driving forces? How and to what extent were students involved?
2. How were memorial committee members selected? What factors were considered in the selection process?
3. Please explain the fundraising and how donations were handled?
4. Regarding the Columbine Memorial, explain the key components of the planning and decision making process.
5. How did financing affect the process of planning and ultimately selecting the design?
6. In planning a memorial, considering the emotional needs of students and families, what special considerations were implemented on their behalf?
7. Now that the memorial is completed, how has the **community** responded?
8. Now that the memorial is completed, how have **students** responded?
9. What lessons did you learn that would be helpful to others in a similar situation--planning a school memorial?

=====

Thank you!

Your input is greatly appreciated. If you have questions or would like to provide additional information, please feel free to do so.

Contact info for Melissa, Rebecka, and the BYU Research Review Board are listed on the bottom of Letter of Consent.

This research was reviewed and approved by the McKay School of Education, subcommittee of Brigham Young University Institutional Review Board (IRB). If you have questions or concerns, please contact the primary investigator, graduate student Rebecka Bingham (contact on pg 1) or the faculty advisor, Melissa Allen Heath (contact info on pg 1). If you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, please contact Dr. Chris Dromey at 801-422-6461 or e-mail Christopher-dromey@byu.edu. Or write to his office at 133 TLRB, Brigham Young University, Provo Utah 84602. You may also contact the Brigham Young University Institutional Review Board (IRB) office: Please Email the ORCA Office: orcastu@byu.edu or call the IRB staff: 801-422-3841. Additional contact information: You may also contact the Brigham Young University Institutional Review Board (IRB) office: Please Email the ORCA Office: orcastu@byu.edu or call the IRB staff: 801-422-3841.

APPENDIX C

HANDOUT

Planning Memorials: Considerations for Schools

Planning Memorials: Considerations for Schools

Organizing Memorial Activities

- Decide how to preserve items left at spontaneous memorial sites
- Decide on a timeline for how long items will remain at temporary memorial sites
- The timeline should not try to rush to closure, but should allow items to be removed to return to a sense of normalcy
- Be careful not to memorialize suicide victims
- Respect religious and cultural diversity
- Involve students and families in planning memorial events
- Plan developmentally appropriate activities for children to express their grief (i.e. younger children may participate with drawings, older children may wish to become involved in service projects)

Planning Permanent Memorials: One Step in the Healing Process

- Involve families, staff, and students in memorial's design and planning
- Consider location for the memorial: Memorials placed inside the school may upset students, reminding them of the tragedy on a daily basis
- Be patient and flexible: Do not rigidly impose deadlines, allow time for grieving, realizing that closure may never be fully achieved
- Consider long term needs: How to fund and maintain the memorial
- Be mindful of equality: Can the same standard be maintained for future tragedies?
- Consider separation of church and state within schools: Involve input from broad based community to accommodate religious and cultural differences

Funding

- Consider having contributions made to a nonprofit organization for tax purposes
- Maintain a consistent record keeping system
- Send "thank you" notes to contributors
- Let people know the immediate financial needs as well as long term needs
- Create a sense of unity by involving community participation in designing and purchasing of symbolic items, such as ribbons and decorative pins
- Welcome and encourage fundraising on all levels, large and small

Additional Resources

http://www.nasponline.org/resources/crisis_safety/memorialdo_donot.pdf

http://www.nasponline.org/resources/crisis_safety/memorials_general.aspx

http://rems.ed.gov/views/documents/CoordinatedResponseToMultipleDeaths_1102.pdf

<http://www.neahin.org/schoolcrisis/index.html>

<http://www.nimh.nih.gov/publicat/nimhviolence.pdf>

APPENDIX D

COLUMBINE MEMORIAL INSCRIPTIONS

In honor of those who died, the following words were chosen by the victims' families to be inscribed on the Columbine Memorial. These inscriptions were published in the 9/21/2007 Denver Post and retrieved June 3, 2008, from http://www.denverpost.com/ci_6963501

Cassie Rene Bernall

Our Cassie had an engaging laugh, beautiful long blonde hair, clear blue eyes and a big warm smile that she generously shared. Her loves were music, snowboarding with her brother Chris, photography, travel and youth group. Seeking to be an obstetrician, she dreamed of bringing new life into this world.

Cassie truly longed to know what heaven would be like and she strived to know the Lord whom she would meet there. Her heart's desire was 'just to live for Christ.' Weeks before her death she expressed her anxiousness to see heaven, stating that she could 'hardly wait to get there.'

When asked how we would ever live without her, Cassie simply replied:

'Wouldn't you be happy for me? You know I'd be in a better place!'

Cassie lost her life because of her belief in God. Although her dreams of ushering in new life tragically ended, her stand continues to encourage many to seek new life through Christ.

We miss her immensely, but know she's in that better place. Phil. 3:10-11

Steven Curnow

Steven Curnow, at 14, was a quiet, thoughtful, generous and forgiving young man. He never held a grudge and was quick to offer help, encouragement, forgiveness and friendship to family, classmates, and soccer teammates.

Steve loved reading, watching adventure movies and playing soccer. When Steve realized he was not skilled enough to make the high school soccer team, his dream of playing professional soccer was gone,

but he never lost his love for the game. He continued to play on his recreational soccer team and was also a referee.

Steve wanted to pursue his dream of becoming a naval aviator. He had found a love of flying during his first plane trip, a family vacation to England. The plane hit some pretty rough turbulence, dropping altitude, tossing side-to-side and shuddering. Talking on the plane suddenly stopped, with many of the passengers becoming white-knuckled and tightening their grips on the arms of the seats. Ten year-old Steve's reaction was:

'Wow! That was cool; let's do it again!'

Steve, you are forever in our hearts. Soar high, and fly straight. We love you!

Dad, Mom and Nancy

Corey DePooter

Corey was a young man who was full of life. He was a person that you would want to spend time with. He loved to talk and could have long conversations on the subjects he was passionate about. With his sense of humor Corey could have a whole room laughing.

Corey was an outdoorsman at heart. Every free hour he had he spent fishing. He loved the mountains, camping with his family, hunting, golfing and fly fishing at Yellowstone.

Corey had just turned seventeen and was excited about his future. He was working at a golf course to save up for his first car. His goal was to become an officer in the Marine Corps. Corey looked forward to becoming a husband and a father and sharing his faith with his children.

Corey cherished his family, his friends, and his life.

Kelly Ann Fleming

A writer and a poet, a gentle soul who walked among us.

CAN THAT BE?

I step outside, what did I hear?
 I heard the whispers,
 And the cries of the people's fear.
 The loneliness of wisdom,
 Can that be?
 The sad, sad sorrow that I see,
 That is past in the trees,
 Is it true, can it be real?
 Can I let them know how I really feel?
 The things that I have seen,
 The things that I have felt,
 The feelings of sorrow
 That I hope will soon melt.
 Wherever I looked,
 Wherever I turned,
 I see shadows all through the night.
 I put my head down and said a little prayer,
 To tell the Lord the sad, sad, sorrow
 And the lonely cries that I have heard.
 After a minute of silence, of wisdom,
 I looked up slowly,
 I saw a thing that I have never seen.
 I saw a light and asked myself can that be?
 Was it real or was it a dream?
 I didn't know but hopefully
 It will come to me.
 It was bright and I was scared.
 I didn't know what or if I should see.
 I looked and then it came to me.
 It was a dream.
 When I was turning to walk away,
 I heard a voice.

Written by Kelly in 1998.

Her first draft; final draft published in *Chicken Soup for the Teenage Soul III*

Matthew Kechter

Matthew, a gift from God.

As the sun rises, the eagle soars, and the wind whispers, we will remember you. Memories are moments of time strung together, but in these moments of reflection we will see the kindness in your eyes, hear your sweet chuckles of laughter, and feel the love for others in your heart. We will always remember your fondness for the outdoors, your passion for sports and your dedication to academic success. Your broad and proud grin after you caught your first trout will never be forgotten. You loved to compete and strive for the best in all sports that you played. You loved to win, yet your sense of fairness and integrity always prevailed. Academically you shined so very bright. Never forgotten will be the moment when you were listening to music, watching a football game and working on your Algebra. When questioned about the distractions, using your Forrest Gump voice you replied, 'I have a 4.0 and that is all I am going to say about that.' Known as

the go-to-guy for homework help you always found time to lend a hand. More importantly, you brought joy to those around you with a kind word or a gentle smile. Your devotion to family and friends will serve as our inspiration to follow as we journey through life. You possessed such profound empathy for someone so young. You were so wise, loving and thoughtful.

'I am with you always.' Matthew 28:20

Daniel Mauser

It is not easy to sum up the life of a son and brother. To his parents he was a first-born gift with spiritual dimensions that caused us to seek a deeper life. To his sister Christine, he was a fun companion but also one who was willing to share his wisdom and knowledge. To his sister Madeline he will be the brother who was never known, but whose presence will always be felt. To others he will be an inspiration for how he tackled his own weaknesses and often overcame them in surprising ways.

We remember Daniel as a boy with a gentle spirit and a shy grin. Often charming and sometimes intense, he was just coming into his own. He still saw the world through largely innocent eyes. He was an inquisitive and occasionally maddening adolescent who would challenge you to examine your assumptions about most everything.

In the most profound sense, however, Daniel was one who, despite difficulties, knew the ineffable sweetness of life and it was part of him. It was out great blessing to have had him as a member of our family.

Daniel Lee Rohrbough

March 2, 1984 - April 20, 1999

What will the world miss?

A precious gift from God with an engaging smile and beautiful blue eyes that would light up the room, sensitive and caring, always quick with a comforting hug. A funny kid with an infectious laugh and a quick come-back, so full of questions and wanting to know how things work. Family was important to you and always included in your life. Just beginning your journey with so much to learn, yet you taught us so much. We miss you...

"Dad, I have a question."

Why?

My son in a Nation that legalized the killing of innocent children in the womb; in a Country where authorities would lie and cover up what they knew and what they did; in a Godless school system your life was taken... Dan I'm sorry. 'I love you dad I'll see you tomorrow.' 7:00 p.m., April 19, 1999. 'There is no peace,' says the Lord, 'for the wicked.' Isaiah 48:22

William "Dave" Sanders

Born in Illinois, as a child he liked Davey Crockett, little league baseball and loved the sound of a bouncing basketball. Dave's young life was mentored by his high school basketball coach. He played basketball and ran cross-country in college then began his career as a business teacher and coach. Dave encouraged students, family members and friends to become better people through kindness and encouragement. He inspired many people to achieve their dreams and his spirit lives on in everyone who loved him or knew him. Know that he loves you all and is with you always. He will always be only one thought away when we need strength and comfort. We have a lifetime filled with memories of a man we are so proud to have known. So, remember Dave for how he lived; not how he died.

We are grateful for his final words: "Tell my girls I love them," we love you too.

Rachel Joy Scott

Her middle name described her; she was a Joy! Her beauty reflected her kindness and compassion. A month before her death she wrote: 'I have this theory that if one person can go out of their way to

show compassion, then it will start a chain reaction of the same. People will never know how far a little kindness can go.'

Rachel had a sense of destiny and purpose. She also had a premonition her life would be short. She wrote: 'Just passing by, just coming through, not staying long. I always knew this home I have will never last.' The day she died she told a teacher: 'I'm going to have an impact on the world.'

In her diary she wrote: 'I won't be labeled as average.'

Her faith in God was expressed in a prayer she wrote:

'I want to serve you; I want to be used by you to help others.'

Her final words were testimony to her life.

When asked if she believed in God, she replied, 'You know I do!'

Isaiah Emon Shoels

The love of God was first in Isaiah's life. The love for his parents, Vonda and Michael, was the highlight of his life. His close relationship with his Grandmother Bessie showed in his respect for others. He loved sports, playing and joking with his family, and was taught to love others no matter how they treated him. Isaiah died in a room filled with hate and darkness. He now lives in a beautiful heavenly room filled with light and beauty. He would want you to look up and see the light, to put away the guns, hate, prejudice, and pride, and see the great light that is love. He is one of the beautiful flowers God picked for his Heavenly Garden, to shine and to be an everlasting light. Isaiah, we will always miss you. We will always love you. With love from your Family and friends.

Stop doing wrong, learn to do right. Isaiah 1:15-17

Maintain justice and do what is right. Isaiah 56:1-2

Those who walk uprightly enter into peace. Isaiah 57:1-2

John Tomlin

Born September 1, John Tomlin was a young man with a broad smile and bright eyes. As a kid he loved cars, baseball, family and God. As a teen he added Chevy trucks and the Green Bay Packers to that list, and his love for Jesus developed in him a strong set of Christian morals.

John had a gentle disposition that parents and girlfriends dream of; the kind that didn't need a heavy hand of discipline and that made him an old-fashioned gentleman on dates. But his sunny disposition could not keep him from entering what many teens enter; a dark tunnel of loneliness where God seemed far away.

John didn't stay long in that tunnel. Seven months before his death he reconnected with God and rediscovered the joy of his faith. That faith sustained John with courage and strength to face evil during the last moments of his life in the Columbine High School library. In heaven now, John fully understands the truth of the words written long ago: 'You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world.' 1 John 4:4

Lauren Townsend

Excerpts from Lauren's Diary

A woman in the middle of a field of flowers kissing Jesus' wounds; I didn't think I could draw such a beautiful picture. I did tonight. It took me only two hours. I think something was guiding me other than just my hand. That is my dream. When I die, I want to wake up in a field of flowers and see Jesus sitting there smiling, happy to see me, holding my hand. Then I want to kiss his wounds.

Maybe it sounds corny, but I can't even describe how happy I would be if I could do that. Then I would hug him, he'd kiss me on the forehead, and we would just sit there hugging in the sun with the wind blowing in our hair. The wind is God because God is everywhere. Just that moment is worth living many lives for.

I feel so peaceful, calm, and joyful; like I am on the verge on enlightenment. There is so much more going on here than we realize. I do think humanity is losing touch with itself and their relationship with their surroundings. Unfortunately it usually takes a huge trauma to get people to realize what is

important and I feel that is what is going to happen to wake up everyone to get in touch with their spiritual sides.

I am not afraid of death for it is only a transition.

For, in the end all there is, is love.

Kyle Albert Velasquez

A young man, who as a child struggled with developmental delays and learning disabilities. He knew his limitations, yet wanted to be like every other kid. He was just beginning to really like who he was. Kyle taught those who loved him so much about unconditional love, compassion, forgiveness, perseverance, and acceptance. He was a true friend to those who chose to take the time to know him. He loved his brother Daniel, the family cats, ice cream, pizza, and riding his bike. He spent his time at home with his family, watching sports with dad and going to the library with mom. Kyle had been a student at Columbine only three months and was just beginning to spread his wings. The world around him was beginning to open up for a young boy who had struggled through school and life. But, through all his delays and difficulties he always smiled, forgave and saw the GOOD in those around him. Kyle was and is very much loved. He will always be missed and never forgotten.