

Teenager shot dead at high school

Young victim remembered as 'a good kid'

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TORONTO - Homicide investigators were still hunting last night for the person who shot to death a 15-year-old boy inside a high school in the city's northwest end, a search that began as students hid under desks while police locked down C.W. Jefferys Collegiate Institute.

At about 2:30 p.m. yesterday, officers were called to the school near Keele Street and Finch Avenue for what they thought was a drowning, Police Chief Bill Blair said.

Jordan Manners, a Grade 9 student, was found near the school's indoor pool, suffering from a gunshot wound.

The slight youth, who was described as "a good kid" who wanted one day to be an actor, was taken to Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre, without any vital signs.

The incident reportedly stemmed from a fight. Police had not recovered a weapon last night.

Classes are cancelled but grief counsellors will be at the school today, Stephanie Payne, the local trustee, said last night.

It was about 30 minutes to the end of the school day yesterday when students thought they heard firecrackers. Anthony Shulz's Grade 10 math teacher ordered his classmates to get away from the door and under their desks, as practised.

"We had a practice lockdown after Virginia Tech so we thought it was someone imitating that," the 16-year-old student said. "It was panic. No one knew what to do. I was nervous, shocked. How could this happen at our school?"

His cousin, Megan Shulz, said updates came through cellphones and text messages.

"We were just scared and we didn't know who it was until someone called and told us. It was just shocking. There was no one crying, but were all just nervous and scared. We were trying to calm each other down."

Meanwhile outside, a crowd of anxious, grim-faced parents and family members massed along the police tape in front of the school. Many were frustrated with the waiting and the uncertainty; they spoke of security concerns, of the shootings at Virginia Tech and Dawson College.

Several parents approached Victoria Zorzella as she spoke on a cellphone to her 14-year-old twin daughters, Michelle and Monique, who were in a library under the watch of teachers. They shouted out the names of their children so Ms. Zorzella could ask her daughters if they were fine.

"My concern is the shooter is still at large," Ms. Zorzella, a 48-year-old mother of six, said over the whir of two helicopters overhead.

Her daughters had been standing with Mr. Manners in the hallway; they left and returned shortly to find that he had been shot.



CREDIT: City Pulse Toronto

A 15-year-old teenager, Jordan Manners was shot at CW Jeffreys C.I. on Sentinel Road on Wednesday, May 23, 2007 in Toronto, Ontario. The victim was rushed to hospital without vital signs and died.

"It was real quick," Ms. Zorzella said. "They were all just standing right there. He was only a little guy."

Chief Blair told media: "We are in that school. I have police officers in every hallway, in every classroom."

The force's tactical unit did a room-by-room sweep and secured all exits before officers, with guns drawn, led the students out single-file at about 6 p.m. The hundreds of students were shepherded into waiting public transit buses and taken to Eliah Junior High School down the street to be reunited with family or simply walk home.

Anna Germaine, the mother of Matthew, a C.W. Jefferys student with Down syndrome, said she was in disbelief over the day's events. "There's no excuse for a society in this kind of shape," she said.

She had arrived at the school to take her son for a haircut in preparation for Friday's prom and discovered the lockdown. She also said she saw the victim's mother crying outside the school.

"I saw her from the side and she was collapsing. She just kept collapsing."

"She was hyperventilating, close to passing out. So I just wanted to help keep her together until she got to the hospital," said another parent, Julie Clyke.

Mayor David Miller told reporters last night he planned to meet with the family, but will wait until a time that is "more appropriate."

He added: "What we've been doing to try to make Toronto safe and ensure that tragedies like this don't happen is very clear. We put 400 more officers on the street, the chief has changed the approach to policing, they now try to get intelligence first."

Toronto filmmakers Mark Simms and Paul Nguyen featured Jordan in their CBC documentary *Lost In the Struggle*. The film traced the lives of three men who grew up in the Jane and Finch neighbourhood where they encountered violence both as victims and perpetrators. Jordan's story did not make the film's final cut, which first aired in October, 2006, Mr. Simms said.

He remembered Jordan as a "good kid." Mr. Manners had siblings and was of mixed ethnicity, he said.

People gathered in groups yesterday at the large brick housing project where Jordan lived. A group of neighbours sat outside his house, talking about the boy they had watched grow up.

"His mother was strict, so he stayed out of trouble," one neighbour said.

A family friend said the family wanted privacy to mourn the loss of their child.

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For video from the scene of the shooting, check out our news blog [Posted at nationalpost.com/posted](http://nationalpost.com/posted).

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