



Week of February 26, 2018

From The Desk of Mayor Don Ryan

Wednesday, February 14, 2018 was supposed to be recognized as a day of love and romance, the tradition of Valentine's Day being celebrated by couples across the country. Instead, it turned into a sudden act of violence as a former troubled student opened fire at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland Florida high school, killing a total of 17 students and faculty members and seriously wounding more than a dozen others. As a former educator who still remains actively connected to the youth of our Village this recent horror hit me especially hard. My heart and prayers go out to the victims and families as well as the entire surrounding community that's been affected by this terrible tragedy.

While law enforcement and other experts struggle with putting together the pieces in trying to better understand what led to this awful event, the reality is that these type of shootings are happening more frequently and the death and injury totals continue to grow. One article I read reported that six of the deadliest mass shootings in modern U.S. history have occurred since 2012, the same year that another troubled young man killed 20 children and six adults at an elementary school in Newtown, Connecticut. Beginning with the Columbine High School Massacre in Colorado, 19 years ago, more than 150,000 students in at least 170 primary or secondary schools have experienced a shooting on campus. That's according to a Washington Post analysis of online archives, state and federal enrollment figures and other news sources. That's a staggering number that's hard to comprehend. Short term, the impact these shootings have on our youngsters is hard enough to measure. Long term no one really knows.

This latest incident has once again revived the debate over gun control. This time around, students are taking action. They have already staged a small protest outside the White House in Washington D.C. with more to come, including planned rallies nationwide on March 24. I, for one support measures to get more guns off the streets. Whether or not that will happen or help reduce the number of incidents like the one in Parkland, Florida remains to be seen. Support from President Trump on truly addressing gun violence would certainly be welcome. His initial reaction to this latest rampage seems like he's willing to further discuss the issue and consider taking measures following the relentless outcry over the deadly shootings. Meeting students, families and school administrators affected by past school shootings was a positive first step by the President. Hopefully, he will do much more as he leads the country through this difficult time.

As things further unfold, I know I'll be keeping a close eye on any developments. In the meantime my thoughts and prayers will continue to be extended to the victims, the families and all the people of Parkland, Florida.

This Week's Best of Hempstead



This week's Best of Hempstead honors are extended to Gretta McDonald. Born and raised in Hempstead Village, Gretta is a prime example of someone who personifies such endearing qualities as caring, giving and making sacrifices.

As a single mother who firmly believes that "it all starts at home," Gretta raised her daughter, Tiffanie, while holding a full-time job at Mercy Medical Centre, her place of employment for the past 34 years. When her daughter Tiffanie was diagnosed with cancer as a student in high school, Gretta became her primary caregiver over the next 15 years as she fought against the deadly disease. During that time Gretta proudly observed and helped support Tiffanie who despite her ongoing illness earned master's degrees from C.W. Post and St. John's University and give birth to her granddaughter, Amani. Sadly, Tiffanie lost her 15 year battle with cancer about four years ago but Greta continues to hold complete guardianship of her granddaughter who is now eight years old and is an honor-roll second grader at Front Street.

In addition, Gretta has established a long track record of doing good deeds in the community and has assisted countless friends, family and strangers through her acts of kindness over the years. Among her efforts include serving as a mentor at a methadone program at Nassau University Medical Center, being a member of the Molloy College bereavement program and volunteering at Family Services where she helps those struggling with drug abuse, domestic violence and homelessness.

Gretta, you have had a positive influence on so many lives that you've touched along the way without asking for anything in return. It gives me great pleasure to recognize you as one of Hempstead's best. Congratulations for this well-deserved recognition.

Sincerely,

Don

Don Ryan
Mayor of the Incorporated Village of Hempstead