

Miami Herald

'We can't carry anger.' Parkland families let doves fly on 7th anniversary of shooting

By Amanda Rosa

February 14, 2025 4:49 PM |



Family members of some victims of the Marjory Stoneman Douglas shooting watch as doves are released during the 'Forever in Our Hearts' commemoration event outside Eagles' Haven Wellness Center on Friday, Feb. 14, 2025, in Coral Springs, Fla. The event aims to honor the 17 lives lost during the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School shooting in 2018 and their families. Photo by Matias J. Ocner mocner@miamiherald.com

About 200 people gathered in Coral Springs on Friday to remember the 17 victims of the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School shooting with the things they loved: art, sports, horses and music.

The somber day marks seven years since a former student killed 14 students and three school staffers and injured 17 others in Parkland, devastating the South Florida community and sparking outrage over mass shootings and gun violence.

But at the “Forever in Our Hearts” 7th Commemoration at Eagles’ Haven Wellness Center in neighboring Coral Springs, family members highlighted happy memories of their loved ones and released doves in their honor.

Throughout the afternoon, community and family members were welcomed to participate in several activities inspired by what the victims loved to do in life, like creating artwork, playing basketball and planting flowers. During a ceremony, family members lit 17 candles and shared stories.

The day before the shooting, on Feb. 13, 2018, Alyssa Alhadeff played her best game of soccer, said Lori Alhadeff, her mother and a Broward County School Board member. Peter Wang’s family remembered how he always put others first, like when he lifted his younger cousin up so she could see the fireworks at Disney World.

“I heard this morning, ‘Love conquers hate.’ I think that’s what we have to really think about, love,” said Mitch Dworet, the father of Nicholas Dworet, as he spoke to the crowd. “We can’t carry the anger. If we carry the anger, it just doesn’t serve us.”

Family members thanked the community and Eagles’ Haven for the support, especially during each anniversary. Constance Marino, 23, painted a blue rose at one of the tents in memory of her cousin Gina Rose Montalto, a 14-year-old who loved art. Gina was “amazing at everything she did,” Marino said.

“Having something to do on a day like today to remember the good about not just Gina, all of the victims, is really nice,” she said. “They all had passions, they all were expecting to have another day. Everyone should always remember those 17 today and everyday.”

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