

Placerville school community healing one day at a time

To the community,

When a tragedy occurs, our community steps forward and envelopes those who have been impacted with strong, caring arms. Last week we in El Dorado County experienced such an event. When Sam LaCara died in a senseless shooting on Feb. 2, we lost a wonderful husband, father, principal, and community leader. Even though we may never understand the reasons why this occurred, we are left to deal with the aftermath and its impact.

Thankfully, our community has rallied, responding with demonstrations of love, caring, and compassion. Of course one of the first concerns we have following a school tragedy is for the children. The Schnell School personnel managed to put the children on buses for a "field trip" to the county fairgrounds, following what appeared to most children to be a safety drill. When children got off the buses to meet their parents, most had no idea of the heartbreak that had occurred.

Counselors from county Mental Health, the county Office of Education, the faith community, and other community organizations have been available to help children deal with issues. School and counseling staff understand it takes time for everyone to process what has happened. Support staff will continue to be present at Placerville District schools to assist those affected in coping with their fears and apprehensions.

District staff members who have always worked so hard to help the children now are in need of, and will be provided, assistance of their own. While it is always difficult to lose a friend or colleague, this situation is much more difficult.

The outpouring of support from crisis counselors, other caring providers, and the community has helped those impacted deal with the situation.

It may seem like a small gesture to attend a commemorative service, to contribute to a memorial fund, to say a kind word to a teacher or a child. However, when these and other loving gestures are added together, this incredible outpouring of support, care, and nurturing is helping heal the wounds that run so deep.

We thank the entire El Dorado County community for coming together to help all those devastated by this event. While a simple "thank you" may seem like a small token, it is shared from the heart of all those who knew and loved Sam LaCara.

Thank you.

Vicki Barber, superintendent El Dorado County Office of Education