

PARKLAND

FEB. 14, 2018 — 2:29 p.m.

“Does anybody have bolt cutters?”

The words come crackling over a police scanner and catch the ear of breaking news editor Doug Phillips. “I can get this kid out of the fence. He’s stuck in the fence.”

Suddenly the curious radio traffic grows grim.

“I see a student down ...”

“I need rescue ...”

“Possibly three more victims, shooter possible inside three-story building ...”

Reporter Linda Trischitta quickly confirms that police are headed to Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, about 10 miles west of the newsroom.

“Go! Just go!” Phillips barks.

With those words, the newsroom of the South Florida Sun Sentinel raced into a furious night of newsgathering that grew into a yearlong look at the worst high school shooting in U.S. history – a tragedy that sparked an unprecedented youth movement for gun control and revealed fatal flaws in school security and law enforcement.

Within hours, the Sun Sentinel delivered hundreds of breaking news updates and pieced together a profile of the disturbed teenage shooter who gunned down 17 staff and students at a school considered one of the safest in Florida.

Relying on public records and deep community sources, we captured the efforts of student activists, revealed breakdowns by police, explored the killer’s troubled life, honored his victims and provided our community with resources to heal – all within days of the murders.

The first story came only 19 minutes after our scanner crackled and 27 minutes after gunman Nikolas Cruz started firing. Police were still tracking him inside the building.



We are hearing reports of a major police presence at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland

2:42 PM · 2/14/18 · [TweetDeck](#)

Shooting investigation at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland

By **Linda Trischitta**
South Florida Sun Sentinel

Police agencies are going to Marjory Stoneman High School in Parkland after reports of a gunman near campus.

The school is at 5901 Northwest Pine Island Rd. in Parkland. The Broward School District could not confirm a shooting.

A television news helicopter report showed at least one person was taken on a gurney into a fire rescue ambulance.

2:48 p.m.

Details remain sketchy, but we post our first story and scramble staff to Stoneman Douglas. Editors send four reporters and three photographers to the school. A fifth reporter is sent to the hospital, prepared for a caravan of victims. Photographer Mike Stocker arranges to get on a helicopter to record the scene from above.

2:52 p.m.

The first photo from the school, taken by staff photographer Amy Beth Bennett, is published online and in social media updates. Rescue personnel are emptying the school of wounded and traumatized students. The shooter is still at large.



Feb. 14 (continued)

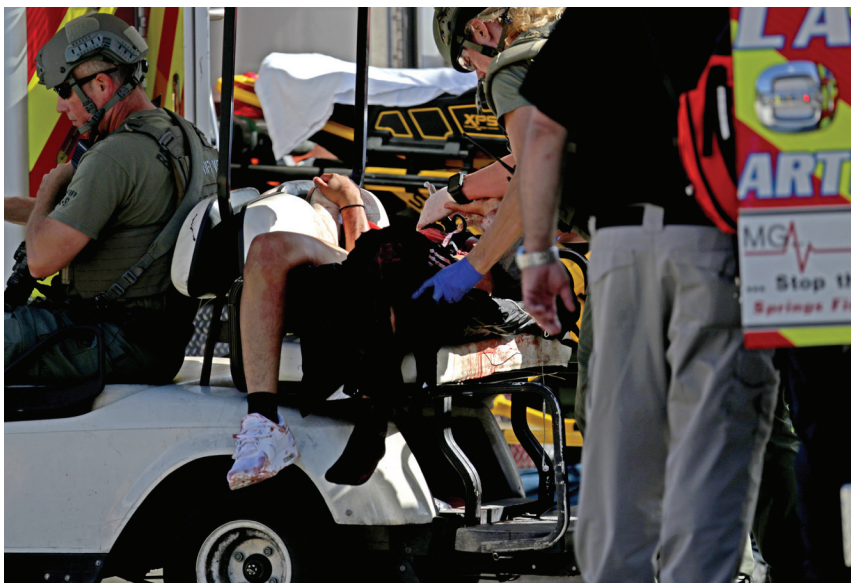
2:58 p.m.

Our story is updated —10 minutes after first posting — with reports of people shot.

3:15 p.m.

Photographer John McCall arrives at the scene and begins capturing photos of badly injured students being rushed away by medical workers — one on the back of a pickup truck, another on a golf cart.

Reporter Aric Chokey arrives and sees parents driving erratically toward the school, hopping their cars onto curbs and running toward the building. Freshman Samuel Dykes tells Chokey of being escorted outside by SWAT officers, who told students not to look at the ground so they wouldn't see dead bodies. Dykes saw them anyway.



3:20 p.m.

We post the first video from the scene and a map. We also post a Spanish-language version of the story for our heavily Hispanic audience.

3:59 p.m.

Reporter Lisa J. Huriash taps longtime sources to confirm that multiple people are dead. Unknown to us and police, the gunman, after fleeing the school and stopping at Walmart and McDonald's, is strolling through a nearby neighborhood. He will be arrested two minutes later.

4:14 p.m.

The Sun Sentinel launches a live video stream, partnering with local TV affiliate WPEC-CBS12.

5:19 p.m.

We post a gallery of photos from Stoneman Douglas.

5:24 p.m.

Three hours after the shooting, we report that the gunman is a former student. Other media identify him incorrectly, but we hold off until we have a positive ID at 5:30 p.m.

5:48 p.m.

Two reporters are assigned to search social media for tips about victims, students and the killer. Editor Brett Clarkson is keenly aware that teenagers do much of their posting on Snapchat rather than Facebook or Twitter. He uses a feature called Snap Map to search the platform by location, homing in on Stoneman Douglas. Clarkson uncovers video taken by a student that shows shots blasting, children screaming and smoke rising. We share the video on social media and post a separate story about the video soon after.

Feb. 14 (continued)

6:25 p.m.

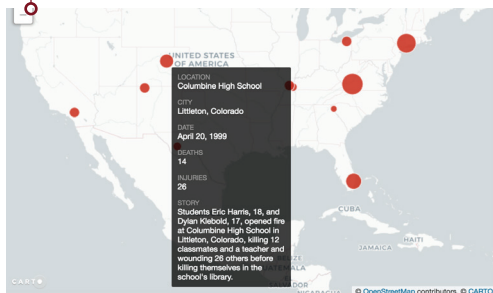
We update our story to confirm that 17 people are dead and several others wounded.

6:36 p.m.

Staff writers Paula McMahon and Stephen Hobbs begin to assemble a profile of Nikolas Cruz, the 19-year-old killer who had been expelled from Stoneman Douglas. They track down classmates who remember him as troubled and "a little off."

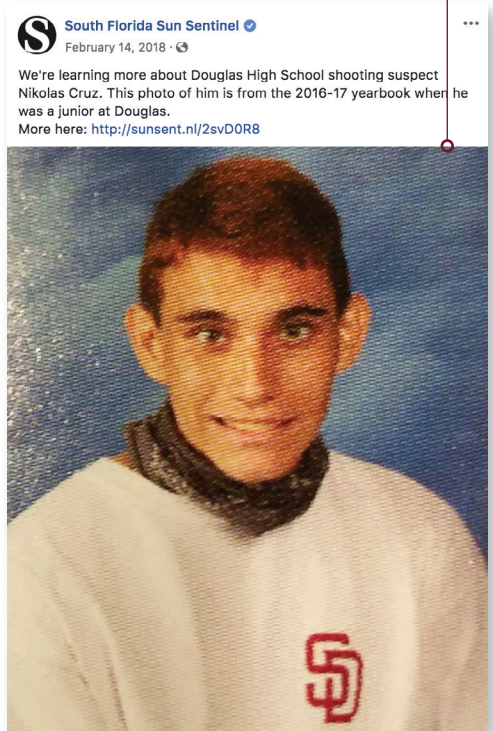
6:49 p.m.

Multimedia designer Yiran Zhu posts an interactive map of major school shootings in the U.S.



7:52 p.m.

We become the first to publish Cruz's yearbook photo from Stoneman Douglas, after reporter Erika Pesantes tracks it down through a relative.



8:41 p.m.

Our first editorial is published, sharing the community's grief and calling for sensible gun laws and mental health reform.

9:00 p.m.

Story posts with political leaders weighing in on changes in gun laws.

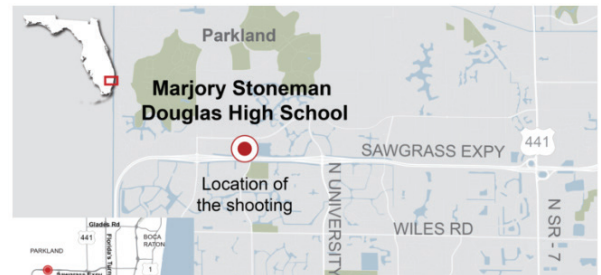
Seventeen killed in South Florida high school shooting

By David Flesher, Aric Chokey, Lisa J. Huriash and Linda Trischitta
South Florida Sun Sentinel

FEBRUARY 14, 2018, 6:25 PM

Seventeen people were shot to death and several others wounded Wednesday at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, in a horrific episode of school violence that ended with the arrest of a former student.

Panicked parents streamed to this school in an affluent part of Broward County, as news helicopters broadcast the incident live and students congregated on streets, many crying, hugging and calling friends and family on their phones.



DAVID HOGG
Stoneman Douglas High School student

8:35 p.m.

David Hogg, a senior at Stoneman Douglas, hears a gunshot from his classroom just before 2:30 p.m. Huddled with fellow students in a tiny, dark classroom, Hogg pulls out his cellphone and begins recording messages from himself and classmates.

"I call on the legislators of this country to take action and stop this from happening," Hogg says. "Thousands of people have died from gun violence, and it's time to take a stand ... for human lives, for children's lives."

Hogg is an aspiring journalist who will soon become a national voice in the March for Our Lives and Never Again movements. He also is a member of the Sun Sentinel's Teenlink program for high school journalists.

Jennifer Jhon, the editor who runs the program, sends out a note asking members from Stoneman Douglas whether they are OK and whether they have stories to tell. Hogg agrees to share his video, telling Jhon: "I don't want to be paid. I just want an internship."

The Sun Sentinel posts clips of Hogg's video at 8:35 p.m., with narration by video editor EmmaKate Austin. It was one of several videos produced in our studio that day.

Feb. 14 (continued)

9:22 p.m.



David Furones
@DavidFurones_

Follow

Athletic director Chris Hixon among those shot at Douglas High School



Chris Hixon, Florida school shooting victim: Athletic director and wrestling co...
Athletic Director Chris Hixon was among those shot and killed at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida on Wednesday.
sun-sentinel.com

Every corner of the news-room has been mobilized to cover the tragedy. Sports reporters David Furones and Gary Curreri work their contacts and get the first on-the-re-

cord confirmation of a shooting victim, athletic director Chris Hixon. An hour later we report that assistant football coach Aaron Feis also was shot.

9:35 p.m.

We post our full profile of Nikolas Cruz's troubled life, just seven hours after he slaughtered his former classmates. An initial story was published at 6:36 p.m. and was updated 82 times. Through sources, social media and street reporting, our staff reached his classmates, neighbors and close family friends. They described him as a young man who was adopted at birth, watched his father die of a heart attack and lost his mother to pneumonia 3½ months before the shooting. He collected guns, bounced around homes, shot chickens and got kicked out of school. Police had been called to his home multiple times, but he had legally purchased the AR-15 rifle he used in the attacks. "I'm afraid he was the kind of kid who would do something crazy," one neighbor says. "The older he gets, the worse kind of trouble he got into." Another says Cruz would bang his head against a concrete wall when he didn't want to go to school.



Nikolas Cruz: Troubled suspect had been expelled from Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School



Nikolas Cruz, 19, has been named as the suspect in the mass shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland. Seventeen people died.

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 15, 2018 \$1.88

SOUTH FLORIDA Sun Sentinel

HIGH SCHOOL MASSACRE

'A HORRIFIC DAY'

- 17 slaughtered, 16 injured in Parkland; gunman arrested
- Former student's social media posts 'very disturbing'
- Some anguished parents still can't get hold of their children



By DAVID FLESHER, ARIC CHORRY, LISA J. HURMAN AND LINDA TRISCHITTA Staff writers

The deadliest school shooting since Sandy Hook erupted Wednesday as authorities say a 19-year-old man with a troubled past and an AR-15 rifle stalked the halls of Parkland's Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School.

Expelled from the school over disciplinary problems, Nikolas Cruz is accused of squeezing off shot after shot as students took cover under desks. Fire alarms blared and teachers barricaded classrooms. By the time it was over, 17 people were dead or dying, and 16 were wounded.

Anguished relatives and friends were keeping vigils into the night Wednesday for teenagers still missing.

"Find her alive!" Vicki Alhadeff said about her granddaughter, Alyssa Alhadeff, 15. "We know she's missing. We can't find her." The phone was traced to the school.

Alhadeff is one of several teenagers who were not answering their cellphones after the mass shooting at the school where 2,000 high school students are enrolled. Worried friends are posting the missing kids' names and photos on Twitter and Facebook.

Gathered in Coral Springs was the Pollock family, awaiting word from Meadow Pollock, 16.

See MASSACRE, 9A

Shooting suspect had been kicked out of school

By PAULA McMAHON, STEPHEN HOBBS, ANNE GAGGIS AND SCOTT TRAVIS Staff writers

Adopted at birth by a loving older couple, Nikolas Cruz seemed to struggle in recent years. His dad died when he was 10 months younger and the 19-year-old's mother died just 2½ months ago, neighbors, friends and family members said.

The portrait of the suspected gunman that emerged was of a troubled former student at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School who had been expelled for disciplinary reasons.

Cruz was arrested without incident at a nearby house shortly after Wednesday afternoon's shootings, which left 17 people dead and several more injured. Broward County Sheriff Scott Israel said.

Cruz's mother, Lynda Cruz, died Nov. 1, after an unspecified illness. She was 66. Family member Barbara Kumbharovich, of Long Island, N.Y., said she had heard media reports about the mass shooting in

See CRUZ, 9A

COMPLETE COVERAGE

EXCLUSIVE VIDEO: Student's video from inside the school. SunSentinel.com/shooting

PHOTO GALLERY: More photos from the scene. SunSentinel.com/school-photos

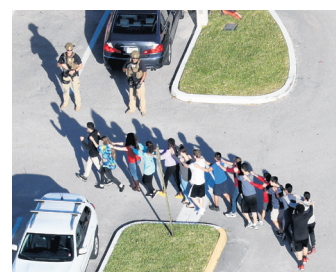
POLITICAL FALLOUT: South Florida politicians receive calls for stricter gun measures. SA

HELP COPING: Experts offer advice on how parents can talk to traumatized teens. SA

ABOUT THE VICTIMS: Those shot include students, the school's athletic director and an assistant football coach shot trying to protect students. SA

'M SHAKING': Students huddled together as attack unfolded. SA

EDITORIAL: School massacre must spur action. BA



Hands raised, students are evacuated from the school by police. Officers from multiple agencies and SWAT team members responded to reports of an active shooter on campus about 2:40 p.m.

"Kids were running out full of blood. Kids were falling in the grass."
Dervel Walton, parent

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11:30 p.m.

The presses roll on the print edition of the Sun Sentinel. Every copy editor and designer on the Night Desk works to transform the day's online coverage into print stories and visuals. As the desk pushes deadline to include the latest information from reporters, the press manager calls: "That's OK, we're fine. This is heartbreaking to watch."

11:55 p.m.

Nine hours after our first report, we update our lead story for the 181st time. It will continue to update until 2:43 a.m. as we begin organizing for the next day. We lay out the questions that will define our work for the next 10 months: How can an 18-year-old with mental health issues buy an assault rifle? How did warning signs about this disturbed teenager get ignored? How did the gunman get through school security? Where were the cops when the bullets were flying? And who were the heroes?

Feb. 15

5:40 a.m.

We post video of Nikolas Cruz being escorted through a back entrance to Broward County's main jail.

9:00 a.m.

We file the first of hundreds of public records requests in the Parkland case. The first ones seek more information about Nikolas Cruz: police calls to his home and school records. We add requests over the next few days seeking to evaluate the police response at Stoneman Douglas: dash and body cam videos, 911 calls, surveillance video, police reports and more. We will spend much of the year in court over denials of our public records requests, and a court battle over the surveillance video will wind up with the Florida Supreme Court before we prevail.

South Florida Sun Sentinel  @SunSentinel

Following 

Nikolas Cruz, the 19-year-old accused in the deadly mass shooting at Stoneman Douglas high school yesterday, was escorted into Broward County's main jail just before 6 a.m. today. He was surrounded by deputies. Read more: [sunsent.nl/2EJN11Y](https://www.sun-sentinel.com/story/news/politics/election/2018/02/15/nikolas-cruz-jail/5231110002/)



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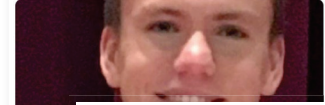
Scott Beigel: A hero teacher who saved students was among 17 killed in Parkland sh

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Martin Duque, Florida shooting victim: 'He was a very funny kid' -

South Florida Sun Sentinel  @SunSentinel

Nicholas Dworet, Florida school shooting victim: A swimmer headed to college at Indianapolis - Sun Sentinel



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
Luke Hoyer: Florida school shooting victim: 'He was a good kid' - Sun Sentinel

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Cara Loughran, Florida school shooting victim: 'We will always love you' - Sun

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Joaquin Oliver, Florida school shooting victim: 'Guac' loved sports, graffiti, hip-hop - Sun Sentinel

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Meadow Pollack, Florida school shooting victim: 'Beautiful inside and out' - Sun

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
Helena Ramsay, Florida school shooting victim: 'Smart, kindhearted and thoughtful' - Sun

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Alex Schachter, Florida school shooting victim: Played trombone and baritone - Sun Sentinel

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
Carmen Schentrup, Florida school shooting victim: National Merit Scholar semifinalist - Sun Sentinel


South Florida Sun Sentinel  @SunSentinel


Peter Wang, Florida school shooting victim: 'Funny, caring, selfless' - Sun Sentinel

South Florida Sun Sentinel  @SunSentinel

Peter Wang, Florida school shooting victim: Brave teen seen holding door open... Peter Wang was a student at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland. sun-sentinel.com


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12:10 p.m.

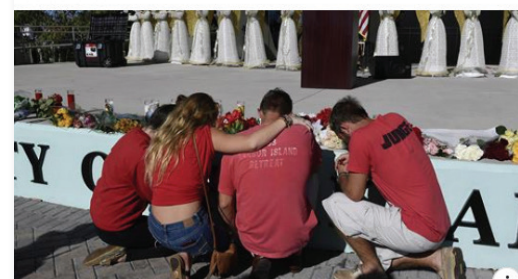
We publish an obituary about Jaime Guttenberg, a freshman who died in a third-floor stairwell at Stoneman Douglas. A team of seven reporters and two editors is dedicated to writing detailed obituaries for all 17 victims. We pull reporters from Sports, Features, Metro and Business departments and assign them to specific families to build relationships for short- and long-term coverage. All of the obits are published by the end of the day Feb. 15 and compiled into an interactive presentation the next day.

1:20 p.m.

We report that the FBI failed to act on a tip months earlier that Nikolas Cruz vowed online to become "a professional school shooter." Later that day, sources tell reporter Stephen Hobbs about Cruz's long history of discipline in Broward schools. The story grows into a catalog of how many people and agencies failed to heed warnings signs about Cruz before his rampage.

South Florida Sun Sentinel  February 15, 2018 · 

"In September 2017, the FBI received information about a comment made on a YouTube channel. The comment said, 'I'm going to be a professional school shooter.'"



SUN-SENTINEL.COM
Florida school shooting suspect due in court Thursday; Trump denounces 'terrible violence, hatred and evil'

2:40 p.m.

We learn that Cruz had encountered a student just after entering the building and allowed him to live. Reporter Rafael Olmeda connects with freshman Chris McKenna through a courthouse source. In an exclusive story, Olmeda recounts Cruz's ominous warning to McKenna: "You'd better get out of here. Things are gonna start getting messy." A state commission later highlights the episode in its investigation into the shooting.

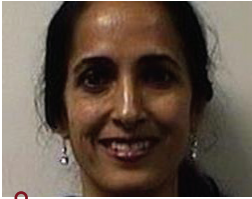
3:47 p.m.

We learn more about how Cruz got his gun. Our story reveals that he passed a background check, including a mental health question, and explains that Floridians can buy assault-style weapons from federally licensed dealers once they reach age 18.

Feb. 15 (continued)

7:25 p.m.

Reporter Stephen Hobbs posts a [video](#) he obtained from Cruz's neighbor, showing him practicing with a gun outside his house months before the attack.



7:55 p.m.

We tell the story of hero teacher Shanthi Viswanathan, who saved students in her Algebra II class. She made them get on the floor in the corner of the room and she put paper over the door's window so no one could see in.



8:40 p.m.

We detail how the killer was able to get around school security, through an open, unstaffed gate. [The story](#) is the first of dozens we end up writing to question inadequate school procedures.

9:45p.m.

Our staff reports from a prayer vigil that drew thousands of mourners at a park less than a mile and a half from Stoneman Douglas High School.



In the first 36 hours of coverage, we produced:

229 updates to our main story.

65 staff-written stories.

13 opinion pieces and editorials.

197 staff photos.

26 updates to the Spanish-language version news story.

The coming days

After two frantic days, the Sun Sentinel newsroom regrouped to continue covering the biggest story of our lives. We organized our staff into teams to explore the many facets of Parkland: the faulty police response, school district failures, the killer himself, the community suffering and the young activists seeking to change the world.

OVER THE FOLLOWING WEEK:

■ Reporter Paula McMahon, working through a source, landed an exclusive interview with the couple who had taken Nikolas Cruz into their home after his mother's death. "We had this monster living under our roof and we didn't know," they said.



■ McMahon obtained confidential records detailing Cruz's repeated involvement with police and child welfare workers, raising questions about why they didn't act.

■ Using an online archive of police radio transmissions, reporter Stephen Hobbs documented that police relied on delayed surveillance video by mistake as they tracked the killer through the school.



■ Working on a tip from a source, reporter Lisa J. Huriash discovered that several sheriff's deputies waited outside the school — not confronting the killer — as gunshots rang out. It is the first confirmation of response failures that would lead Florida's governor to remove Broward Sheriff Scott Israel.



■ Columnist Mike Mayo rushed to Newtown, Conn., to learn lessons from the mass shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School.

■ Photographer Susan Stocker embedded with the Parkland students on a seven-hour bus ride to lobby legislators in Tallahassee for tougher gun laws.



■ As the debate about Parkland spread, we began a Facebook group providing the community a place to come together. Moderated by two editors and a reporter, it grew to 800 active members and 15,000 engagements on 900 posts.

Parkland became a story that consumed our newsroom for all of 2018. Our work in those first few days helped shape a community debate about police work, school security and government accountability for the next 10 months.

It was an effort that began on Valentine's Day with one peculiar question on a police radio:

"Does anybody have bolt cutters?"