



Columbine survivor delivers message to stop school violence

By Sara Macho, Sun News

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NORTH ROYALTON -- Craig Scott survived what many believe to be the worst high school shooting in the nation's history.

Now, nearly 11 years later, Craig is helping to prevent such massacres from reoccurring.

Through his service to "Rachel's Challenge," Craig communicates the story of his sister, Rachel, the first victim of the tragedy at Columbine High School in Littleton, Co.

He visited the North Royalton Middle School and High School Jan. 14.

His presentation includes five challenges to the schools he visits, including the courage to show compassion and kindness to others, maintain positive influences and hold fast to goals and dreams.

Craig sees and hears many reactions from the students he visits, including confessions to cause harm to others and feelings of isolation. Once, at a school in Texas, a young student handed Craig a crumpled piece of paper.

It was a hit list.

"Our organization has documented 10 cases where students planned to shoot others at their school or blow the building up and heard our presentation and had a change of heart," Craig said. "It is not easy for me to re-live this stuff, but it is worth it."

On April 20, 1999, Columbine High School seniors Dylan Klebold, 17, and Eric Harris, 18, opened fire on their classmates and teachers. Rachel Scott, 17, was sitting outside eating lunch and became the first student to lose her life in the attack.

As shots rang out, Craig, then 15, ducked for cover underneath a table in the library. His two friends joined him. Klebold and Harris stormed the library and ordered Craig's friends to get out from underneath the table. They were shot and killed.

In the days following the attack, police recovered a diary hidden inside Rachel's backpack. Always supportive of Anne Frank, Rachel too had kept a journal and recorded her thoughts for peace, compassion, trust, faith, fellowship and courage. She once traced her hands and scribbled "These hands belong to Rachel Joy Scott and will some day touch millions of people's hearts."

What prompted "Rachel's Challenge" wasn't just this tattered journal, which was damaged by the bullet that killed Rachel, but a paper she wrote one month earlier.

The composition, titled, "My Ethics, My Codes of Life," illustrated her belief that just one act of kindness and compassion can ignite a "chain reaction" of good will.



Hundreds of signatures adorn a North Royalton Middle School banner inspired by a presentation by Craig Scott, a Columbine High School survivor and brother of the first victim, Rachel.

Eerily, Klebold and Harris also spoke of a "chain reaction" in recovered home videos. Their words spoke of the start of a revolution full of hatred and anger.

In light of Craig's visit, North Royalton Middle School, like many other schools throughout the country and world, has started a new club.

Students will meet weekly to brainstorm projects that will help make the school and community a better place.

On Jan. 14, about 100 student leaders lined up to present their ideas. Students suggested decorating local nursing homes with handmade cards, volunteering at food banks and raising funds for animal shelters.

"Our school district is about pride in academics and success, but it is also about what kind of person you are," said Superintendent Edward Vittardi.

For more information about "Rachel's Challenge" and to learn more about Rachel Joy Scott, visit **rachelschallenge.org/**.

Scott's visit was funded through the principal's fund, the Middle School PTA, a Safe and Drug-Free Schools Grant and a Title IV Grant.

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