

COURIER

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Call first: 3540 Evergreen Parkway, Evergreen, CO, 80439

Mailing Address:
143 S. 2nd Pl.,
Brighton, CO 80601

Phone: 303-566-4100
Web: CanyonCourier.com

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844-644-NEWS

SCOTT TAYLOR

Editor
scott@cotin.org

JANE REUTER

Community Editor
jane@cotin.org

JOHN RENFROW

Sports Editor
john@cotin.org

SUZIE GLASSMAN

Education Editor
suzie@cotin.org

DONNA REARDON

Marketing Consultant
dreardon@coloradocommunitymedia.com

LINDSAY NICOLETTI

Operations/ Circulation Manager
lnicoletti@coloradocommunitymedia.com

BUSINESS INQUIRIES

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coloradocommunitymedia.com

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EvergreenStrong announces guidelines for assistance

BY JANE REUTER
JANE@COTIN.ORG

The EvergreenStrong Community Recovery Fund, created from donations given in the wake of the Sept. 10 Evergreen High School shooting, has so far raised more than \$90,000 to help those impacted by the tragedy.

The group recently posted guidelines for seeking that assistance on the Evergreen Legacy Foundation website. Multiple funds surfaced within days of the shooting and some people were concerned about fraudulent fundraising.

To ensure some of that money stayed in the Evergreen community with familiar agencies, the Evergreen High Parent-Teacher Association and ELF formed the EvergreenStrong Community Recovery Fund.

Donors can also contribute to the Colorado Healing Fund, and/or a GoFundMe page created specifically for one of the victims.

"The Jeffco School District arranged for Colorado Healing Fund to be the designated collector of funds, but parents and the Evergreen community wanted to be involved," said Linda Kirkpatrick, ELF's executive director. "Representatives of the EHS PTSA approached ELF to partner with them to add credibility and transparency to the effort."

The purpose of each fund — the EvergreenStrong Community Recovery Fund, Colorado Healing Fund and Silverstone's GoFundMe — differs slightly.

The separate GoFundMe page to benefit the family of Matthew Silverstone, one of the two victims of the shootings, raised more than half a million dollars in the first four weeks after the tragedy.

"We have encouraged donors to choose any one of the three funds," Kirkpatrick said. "As doctors have pointed out, Matthew will face costly, lifelong medical challenges and supporting him directly through the GoFundMe page gives the family the greatest latitude in making use of those contributions."

Those monies, as stated on the GoFundMe page, will go into a medical trust. Safe donations

The Colorado Healing Fund, started in 2018 to deter fraudulent fundraising after mass tragedies, works to help meet the needs of victims, extending to those who were nearest the incident. They typically distribute funds through the victims' advocacy system of the sheriff's department. But in this case, it asked the Evergreen Legacy Foundation to serve as a community partner in distributing \$40,000 it collected on behalf of EHS.

The #EvergreenStrong Community Recovery Fund's goal is much broader, Kirkpatrick explains, and is based on the advice of a similar foundation established in Kinder, Ga. A 14-year-old high school student shot and killed four people and injured nine others there in September 2024.

Calling it a "community recovery fund" enables #EvergreenStrong to provide assistance to teachers, first responders, and anyone in the community impacted by the event — not just those who were on scene or directly victimized.

With that in mind, the local fund gave money to help an Evergreen counseling nonprofit.

"Mental health counseling has been identified as the #1 need, so the very first disbursement from our fund went to Resilience1220," Kirkpatrick said.

It gives free counseling to those between the ages of 12 and 20.

Working with Resilience1220, the #EvergreenStrong team covered the cost of group sessions for parents and other community members. Their donation also provided



Local businesses have offered services and goods for their neighbor impacted by the Sept. 10 shooting.

money for counselors to receive training specific to trauma.

"In addition to faith-based counseling options and independent psychologists who charge private rates, Resilience1220 is a trusted, local option for counseling," Kirkpatrick said. "It's a valuable free service that's being provided locally, and we want the community to know about it."

Resilience1220 gained 100 new clients in the first 30 days following the tragic event at EHS, according to executive director Lindsey Breslin.

EvergreenStrong has also taken measures to ensure its donations are well used.

"We have been working closely with the Colorado Healing Fund, which has pulled us into discussions with the Sheriff's Department and Victims' Advocacy, Jeffco Schools, Colorado Gives Foundation, and other organizations to avoid duplication of efforts and to stretch the donations as far as possible," said Kirkpatrick, who coordinates the #EvergreenStrong Community Recovery Fund committee.

A portion of the \$90,000 in donations collected to date has been offered to the families of the two victims, although the family of Victim #2 — who remains anonymous — has declined offers for help.

The EvergreenStrong committee has been advised by multiple sources not to distribute all its money too quickly, as needs will arise over time.

"How people need help is not always readily apparent," said Kirkpatrick. "Nurses who care for victims of school shootings are said to be the most apt to complete suicide, for instance."

One of the organization's benefactors will be an organization called VitalHearts, which provides intensive counseling for professionals including volunteer responders and teachers over a 3-day period.

To donate, find guidelines and forms to request assistance, or for updates, go to www.evergreenlegacyfdn.org/evergreen-strong.



Matthew Silverstone wears his Evergreen High School letterman jacket.

COURTESY PHOTOS