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Teen tragedies: Shamar 'didn't deserve to die that way,' mom says

Ernst Lamothe Jr. and Fernando Diaz
Staff writers

STORY CHAT: Post Comment

April 14, 2007 4:57 am — Staring at a picture of her well-dressed, hair-braided cousin taken a few years ago, Paulette Harris paused and smiled when she thought about Shamar Patterson.

"He used to joke around so much and make funny faces to make me laugh," said Paulette, 8, on Friday. "I already miss him so much."

Shamar, 16, a junior at Gates Chili High School, was being kept on life support Friday so his family can donate his organs. He was shot in the head Wednesday at the corner of Earl and Genesee streets. Rochester police Capt. Kevin Costello said the death is being treated as a homicide and officers were following strong leads.

Whether it was catching footballs as a wide receiver or running around a Gates Chili track, family members said Shamar lived to make others laugh. Neighbors left teddy bears and flowers on the corner where Shamar was shot.

Holding her youngest child, 1-year-old Jessica, tightly in her arms, Joan Patterson talked about her eldest child.

"Shamar was not a gang banger, was not a drug dealer and was not a bad kid. He was a vibrant, intelligent, outgoing comedian who loved getting his hair braided and was loved by everyone," Patterson said during a news conference Friday at Strong Memorial Hospital.

She also announced the decision to donate her son's organs: "Through organ donation, others won't have to grieve for their families and this senseless death will give someone else life."

Nearly 100 friends, teachers and school officials came by the hospital to try to help.

"I'm just astonished by the people who came to the hospital with comforting words and a spirit of helping in any way they can," said Patterson.

Gates Chili school officials made counselors and psychologists available for two hours Friday for the high school's 1,750 students and faculty. Counselors also will be available today.

"All of us here at Gates Chili schools are mourning the loss of one of our students," said Rick Stein, superintendent of the district. "This was a senseless act of violence."

Tim Clasgens, principal of Gates Chili High School, said the district's "extended family" was hit hard by the loss. Shamar has two sisters at Washington Irving Elementary and a brother at Gates Chili Middle School. A number of his cousins also go to school in the district.

Shamar was the first violent death for the district in recent memory, officials said.

Shamar slept Tuesday night at the home of his grandmother, Myrna Patterson. After coming back from work early Wednesday afternoon, she tried to take a nap but felt restless.

"Suddenly I jumped up and looked at the clock and it was 5:13 p.m.," she said. Three minutes later, her phone rang.

"A neighbor was yelling, telling me to come over, that Shamar needed help because he was shot," said Myrna Patterson.

Joan Patterson said her son was hanging out near his grandmother's home on Earl Street with about nine other kids. Then a group of males driving a black four-door Ford Taurus rode by, opened their window and started firing shots.



WILL YURMAN staff photographer
Joan Patterson of Gates, holding 1-year-old daughter Jessica, said her son, Shamar, who was shot Wednesday, "was not a gang banger, was not a drug dealer and was not a bad kid."

Day in Photos

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Remembering Shamar

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Gates Chili Central School District Superintendent Rick Stein and high school principal Tim Clasgens discuss impact of Shamar's death.

Counseling and donations

The Gates Chili school district is offering counseling from 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. today at the high school, 1 Spartan Way. Also, the family has set up a Shamar Patterson Scholarship Fund. Visit any Canandaigua National Bank to contribute.

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One of the other kids was shot in the leg and has been released from the hospital.

"These are young kids gimmicking and playing characters they see from TV and taking innocent lives," said Patterson, who talked with strength and compassion about her son's memory and the need to stop violence.

"We're losing a generation of young men. Shamar was just standing there and he didn't deserve to die that way."

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PPP

You are sadly mistaken about MySpace. Recently I compiled a collection of ROCHESTER gang-related websites by searching MySpace using terms such as Thurston Zoo. I passed those on to contacts in the RPD. While it is no longer possible to find those sites using those search terms, the sites still exist.

And those are just ROCHESTER pages.

I will not post the URLs here because I do not want to give those gang pages any media play.

The truly shocking thing for me is that I recognized faces and locations of young people who are my neighbors, including graffiti in a back yard that I can see from my bedroom window.

And, BTW, those pages use rap recordings that are every bit "Gangsta."

So I don't think you really know what you are talking about!

gnesmith
Posted: Sun Apr 15, 2007 6:02 pm

@eBBY: This is my responce to your comments.

In case you havent relized, the era of "Gangsta rap" died when B.I.G. was gunned down. Now, the predominate form of Hip-Hop is "Snap" music, which is way more sex than violence. Besides, I don't think I've heard any lyrics that encourage violence on the radio since a long time ago.

Myspace... the scapegoat of all modern-day problems. Why is it that people automaticly think MySpace is whats causing problems? I sincerly doubt that they would allow "Gang pages" up on their website (I'm not sure since I'm not a member and thus havent read the rules). MySpace can be abused, but the so-called "danger" of MySpace is being blown all out of propotion by the Media and the Parents who were too stupid to teach their daughter common internet sence before she got raped.

Television. The way you say "[Programs] that glorify thug life" is unconvincing, since I don't think any TV shows really glorify "thug life" anymore. And even if the TV plays programs like that: its the parents fault if their kid goes out on a shooting spree. They should teach their kids that what happens on Television and what you can do in Real Life are two very different things. I was taught things like that, and now I can watch shows like 24 or The Sopranos (and I'm 13) because I know you should not act like that in real life.

In conclusion, it's not the fault of the other people: its the fault of the parent for not explaining to the kid right from wrong. And I don't mean censoring the kid from violence and havin g them grow up all "pure". I mean explaining to them what not to do and how to not be influenced by the media.

-PPP

Propane Powered Penguin
Posted: Sun Apr 15, 2007 5:06 pm

The reason a lot of this happens is because the politicians are passing all the wrong laws and doing little to nothing to prevent this, well except for their tongue and cheek bull that gets them elected/re-elected.

Tough laws have done little to stop this, am I wrong? Prevention is the key. Stopping this before it happens is the most logical step. How do we do this? First stop blaming everyone else and looking for a short and easy way to deal with it. Lives depend on the right ways to handle this.

I am very sorry for the families loss. Murder is the worse of all crimes and no one, especially a child or teen, should have to suffer through that or be a victim.

Americanleper
Posted: Sun Apr 15, 2007 4:47 pm

MY HART GOS OUT TO SHAMAR PATTERSON AND HIS FAMILY I HAVE THREE SONS OF MY ON. I HOPE THAT THE BOYS WHO DID THIS GET LIFE I DON,T NO WHAT TO SAY BUT I AM SO SORRY THAT THIS HAPPIN TO YOU AND YOUR FAMILY. OUR KIDS ARE DIEING EVERY DAY AND NO ONE IS STOPING IT. KIDS WITH GUNS WERE ARE THEY GETING THEM FROM IT IS BAD WHEN YOUR KIDS CAN,T GO OUT SIDE AND PLAY WITH OUT BEEN GUN DOWN. ?

babygirl67
Posted: Sun Apr 15, 2007 4:29 pm

Mr. Eagle.

I can't say I agree with any inference to a conspiracy theory, because I think you make a very poignant statement that is more to the heart of the matter.

"but the men of the (majority) communities themselves would have long ago taken matters into their own hands. That's how much they seem to love their children, families and communities. You may not like to "hear" me say this, but you can't deny it!!! BLACK MEN DO YOU HEAR ME!!! "

I would ask you why is it you think that the people themselves in the black community are not doing more? Not to say that there are not many people such as yourself who have just had enough and are seriously looking for answers, it is that there are also many who are apathetic and even many times, in agreement with and an active part of this violent lifestyle.

And what on earth can be done to turn this tide? The death of Shamar has touched people

everywhere. I live in one of the Eastern suburbs of the city of Rochester, and everyone here (of all races) is aware of and heartbroken by this tragedy.

What can be done so that he did not die in vain?

Mugsy'sMom

Posted: Sun Apr 15, 2007 8:54 am

We need HELP. Help in reaching our youth before it is too late. We need interventions put in place at the Elementary School level. We are seeing children...babies...mimic what they see on television, what they hear in the lyrics of music, and what they see on the street. By the time they reach high school it could be too late. We are losing our innocent children. Little boys are looking up to gang bangers and thugs, and somehow have gotten to the point that they think that going to jail is no big deal. There is a general lack of respect for authority in general, but especially of police officers and of teachers. Kids are getting confused as to who they should respect, and the meaning of the word respect now means fear. Being a member of a gang is no longer hidden, children as young as the Elementary School level are wearing the colors of who they "rep", and are not just mimicking anymore- it's reality. Older gang members are recruiting young children, and our young boys are getting sucked in at an alarming rate. I see children almost everyday wear Tupac Shakur on their clothes-this is a man who was killed by gang violence over ten years ago. He was a gansta rapper, and affiliated with gang activity, and our children who were born after he passed away are wearing his image on their clothing today. Our radio stations are playing music with the most repulsive lyrics, children are going to websites like mspace and seeing people basically advertise their gang on their page, and videos are shown on TV that glorify thug life. We need HELP.

As a teacher in an Elementary School very close to where Shamar was killed, I do my best everyday to not just teach my students to meet the standards in reading, writing, math, science and social studies, but to also teach them life skills and strategies. Yes, it needs to come from home, but it also needs to be reinforced in school everyday. I hope and pray that my students will remember the feelings they have this year of being successful, and remember how proud they are of their success this school year in the future, and use that as strength in their long road ahead. But, we need more. We need HELP. My thoughts and prayers are with Shamar's family. It never should have happened. I am so sorry that it did.

eBBy29

Posted: Sun Apr 15, 2007 7:40 am

I extend my sincere condolences to the Patterson family and to so many other families who have lost loved ones to senseless, crazy, violent madness, which is sweeping, and has swept across Rochester for decades!!!

As noted in the comments below by "Behind Home Plate --- the statement on TV by the authorities about kids now using guns as a solution for things they used to have fist fights over, is so true." That quote strikes at the heart of a critically important question, which I have been raising in this community for decades: Why in the hell are illegal weapons so readily available to "kids [who are] now using guns as a solution...?" Is it possible that young people "use to have fist fights" because illegal guns were not readily available on a wide scale basis!!!?

I am in agreement that the simplistic, almost silly manner in which the writer below who signed as "sdw_86" raised the issue of race --- does appear to be a matter of so-called "playing the race card." Yet we mustn't become confused, and make a quantum leap (based on one silly comment) that this issue has nothing to do with race. On the contrary, the issue absolutely is concretely connected to race in a number of ways!!!:

The decades-old phenomenon of large numbers of predominantly young African American and Latino youth murdering each other in the streets, is not unique to Rochester or New York. It is, and has been happening throughout the U.S. of A. (from coast to coast, in every direction), literally, for decades!!!

Call it "conspiracy theory" or whatever you will, but there is absolutely no one or nothing that could possibly convince me of the belief that if this epidemic of violence was sweeping across predominantly white communities --- more would not be done to stem the tide!!!

I have also been asking for decades, if our babies (literally little children) know where to find illegal weapons (and they obviously do) --- then why is it that, with all of their sophisticated technology and equipment --- law enforcement officials (City and County police, the ATF, FBI, CIA, and probably other "alphabet" law enforcement agencies that we haven't even heard of) --- can't seem to find the same weapons, and can't prevent the hemorrhaging of illegal weapons, which strangely enough, continue to find their way only into predominantly, economically poor, African American and Latino communities!!!?

I support those who believe that we have had enough meaningless peace vigils, makeshift roadside memorials, and ineffective, so-called anti violence initiatives to last us for a lifetime or two!!!

It's past time for law enforcement officials and even the National Guard if necessary, to stop the illegal weapons from flowing through our communities like water, period. This (without a doubt) represents the most important and significant, single thing that can be done to help reduce violence and early deaths!!!

And, I'll say to BLACK MEN, and anyone else who might want to help, but specifically BLACK MEN --- the situation has become so dire and so desperate (indeed as Ms. Patterson noted during her Press Conference --- we are losing significant numbers of a [second] generation, since we've already lost significant numbers of the last generation to senseless, ruthless, insane violence) --- that it's past time for us to get serious about considering what we need to do (beyond peace vigils, roadside, make-shift memorials, ineffective so-called anti violence initiatives, and big talk) to help stop the flow of deadly weapons into our communities. I am unequivocally convinced that if this madness was occurring in the majority community, not only would law enforcement officials and probably the White House and Congress as well (since this is a national emergency) have taken faster, more effective and efficient measures to stop it by now, but the men of the communities themselves would have long ago taken matters into their own hands. That's how much they seem to love their children, families and communities. You may not like to "hear" me say this, but you can't deny it!!! BLACK MEN DO YOU HEAR ME!!!!?

Why am I so adamant about this issue? Well, there are numerous reasons, but one is because, along with lots of other innocent young people, my 5-year-old baby boy, and 12-year-old baby girl live one block down the street from where a young, aspiring Minister was gunned down last year, and two blocks from where young, Shamar Patterson was gunned down a few days ago!!!

Howard Eagle

Posted: Sun Apr 15, 2007 1:27 am

swds a valid point. the original story was reported at 2 men shot,not teens. it may seem irrelevant to some, but it is relevant to many. whether your uncle worked in the 60's or whatever, the franklin neighborhood is still vibrant with many homeowners and active churches trying to do unto others. do not forget that father that gutted his wife and child and grievous injured his baby daughter . they lived in upscale greece in suburbia. sin abounds everywhere.

convenienttruth
Posted: Sun Apr 15, 2007 12:27 am

My prayers are with Joan Patterson and her family. I will also pray for the soul of Shamar Patterson... this is so sad and heart-wrenching. My sincere condolences to the Patterson's.

ronib, I did the same as you, except a few years earlier. I joined the USAF in 1974 and was gone from the area until I moved back here in 1983. My Uncle taught science at Franklin for many years. Maybe you had him as a teacher. I used to play at the Franklin playground and my Uncle was the Instructor there in the 60's. Things have changed in the old neighborhood...

rochester_veteran
Posted: Sat Apr 14, 2007 6:01 pm

Katrina you are so on point!!! Home is where the problem is. So many parents want to be their kids "friend". My 13 year daughter right now thinks I am so mean because I monitor her online time and I refuse to let her have access to my space and u tube sites. Our kids are NOT ready for some of the things they are exposed to and they BELIEVE what they see. This death is so tragic and unnecessary and I too am tired of the candle light vigils and calling for "someone to do something". Wake UP People!!!!!!

Booper1956
Posted: Sat Apr 14, 2007 5:46 pm

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