

THE FORUM

The Student Newspaper of Lincoln-Sudbury Regional High School

TUESDAY, JANUARY 23, 2007

School community in shock grieves, seeks healing

A day at L-S we will never forget

What began as a normal day at Lincoln-Sudbury Regional High School on Friday, January 19, had turned into one of the most tragic days in L-S history by 7:20 in the morning.

Students in B building heard a disturbance coming from the boys' restroom on the main level. Some seniors who were gathered at the senior spot heard cries for help, and within several minutes saw faculty members rushing to the restroom. Later in the day, the community would learn that a student, James Alenson, had died after being attacked by another student.

While some staff members attended to Alenson, others alerted paramedics or detained the alleged perpetrator. Staff members also instructed most students to report to the cafeteria, and students in hallways were escorted into classrooms. Later, most students were moved to the main gym.

Rumors spread quickly in the cafeteria, where approximately 1,000 members of the student body were being held in a lockdown status. Some students had heard of a fight between two female students, while others told accounts of seeing caution tape and pools of blood by the library. Faculty members milled through the crowd and expressed their shared confusion about the incident with the students.

Students arriving at the school after the incident saw fire engines, police cars, and ambulances at the front entrance of the school. Many students were turned away from the school entrance in the A-B connector and told to return home.

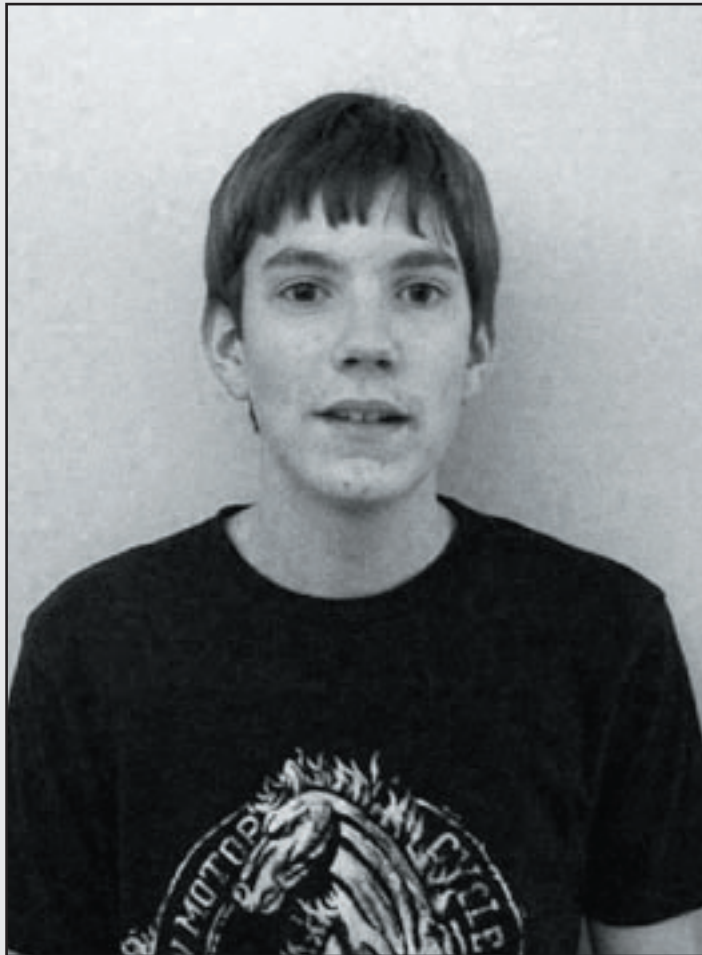
Policemen from Lincoln and Sudbury entered the building and approached students in the cafeteria, asking if anyone had seen or had concrete information related to the incident.

After about forty-five minutes of waiting in the cafeteria, housemaster Iain Ryrrie asked that students listen for Dr. Ritchie's first announcement about this tragic day. He spoke to the L-S community on the P.A. system and thanked everyone for their patience and cooperation. He explained that they were still trying to uncover all the information about the event. He stated that it was necessary for everyone to remain in school until further notice, in accordance with the school's emergency procedures, which had been reviewed by the entire staff only two days before.

About thirty minutes later, Dr. Ritchie entered the cafeteria and made a second, similar announcement, stating that students were to stay under lockdown until the entire situation was understood. By this time, the basics of what had transpired that morning had spread throughout most of the crowd, and many used their cell phones to inform parents and friends of the developments at the school. Consequently, several parents called local police stations, news stations, and L-S with deep

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Remembering James Alenson



James Alenson was a freshman in the Lincoln-Sudbury community, and his family had just recently moved to Sudbury.

His teachers, including Debra Bieler and Tom Grandprey, describe him as an extremely focused and hardworking student, who graced everyone with a beau-

tiful smile. They were always delighted with his determination to improve and ability to stay on top of his academics. "Even in the short time that I knew him, I watched him grow academically and was impressed by his fortitude and progress in my class," says Bieler. James was truly a mature fifteen year old. Rebecca

Carr, James' English teacher, described James as being witty and finding meaning in making others smile. Students in his English class recall him making everyone laugh through his performance in a skit. "He was just the kindest person," says Carr.

His friends at Lincoln-Sudbury say he enjoyed creative writing and playing chess. He is described as having a shy and quiet demeanor, but was vocal and zealous when it came to his favorite sports team, the New England Patriots.

During the summer, James attended Camp Mi-te-na in Alton, New Hampshire, where counselors and fellow campers alike expressed their admiration of James' kind character. One student and fellow camper commented that they knew camp would not be the same without James there. James was a talented musician who had played trumpet for several years and shined in the Natick Middle School band as well as here at L-S.

Michael Aiello, a freshman from Natick High School, became close to James during eighth grade.

"Many people may have seen him as a quiet and shy kid," says Aiello, "but if they took the time to get to know him, they would have found a whole different personality underneath. He was a fun-loving and carefree boy. He was a straight-A student, yet he was not all serious. He loved to joke around and tried to make us laugh when he could. He had such attention to detail. On a PowerPoint project we worked on together, he was constantly changing all the fine details to make it not only factual, but visually appealing. He was just an all-around model student and great young man."

Words from two leaders

Dr. Ritchie, Governor share sentiments

"As I write this, I'm sitting here feeling the combination of a heart that's broken because of what happened in our school, the death of James Alenson, and a heart that's been uplifted by the outpouring of support we've gotten, the incredibly inspiring presence of our students, and the deep professionalism and sensitivity of our staff. I'm very sad about the former, and very moved by the latter. Out of terrible events, some good always emerges, and if we've learned to love each other more, and be even more compassionate to those whom we may not know, I think that's a good thing.

The last irony is that much of my job (and our jobs) involves helping students. Over the last four days, it is students who have helped me, and for that I will be forever grateful."

-Dr. Ritchie's latest statement to students

'It is students who have helped me, and for that I will be forever grateful.'

-DR. JOHN RITCHIE

'The students have handled this as well as anybody could have hoped.'

-GOVERNOR DEVAL PATRICK

"It's about 12:30 on Saturday morning, and I just want you to know, and your team to know, that I have been thinking about you and the kids and the families, all of whom are touched by the tragedy that happened at school yesterday. If there is anything at all I can do, or my team can do, to support you and the community going forward, please, please reach out to me. I think from all reports, you, the police, the faculty, the community leaders, and the students have handled this as well as anybody could have hoped... I am sure that no one ever imagined such a tragedy would happen, and I am just so grateful that you all have stepped up and shown yourselves to be such a strong community. I am grieving for all of you, and again, if there is anything I can do, please reach out to me.

Thank you so much, and take care."
-Gov. Patrick's phone message to Dr. Ritchie

Caroline Han, faculty

This is probably the tenth time I've sat down to try and compose something. In any given moment, I feel something different, which makes it very difficult to get something down on paper. Ask me what I was feeling yesterday (Friday), and it was numbness and disbelief for much of the day. Ask me earlier today, as I was driving in my car, not even thinking about the tragedy, and it was wave after wave of stabbing sadness for the families involved, the faculty and students who know James and John, and the Lincoln-Sudbury community. Ask me tomorrow, and I will be feeling something different. And moments in between now and who-knows-when will no doubt elicit a different emotion, thought, or experience in response to this tragedy. I guess, more than anything, I want to communicate that for the past fifteen years, Lincoln-Sudbury has never been merely the place where I work. And I will do everything I can to be a source of support and help to my colleagues, students, and the community. I know that among the faculty, staff, and administration at L-S, I am not alone in this last sentiment.

Sara Dicker, '07

I was running late, as usual, so my dad offered to drive me to avoid the ten minute walk in the cold. As we turned onto Concord, I saw that cars were barely moving, so I got out and walked the rest of the way. I wondered why there was so much traffic so late in the morning.

I approached the school and noticed about six police cars and a fire truck. I walked warily by, noting that no one was in any of these vehicles. Just inside the doors were a janitor and a teacher telling me to head up the side staircase to the right. I asked a teacher by the stairs if everything was alright and he said that it was, that they were just trying to clear everyone from the hallways. At the top of the stairs, Mr. Grant directed me into a classroom to the left, where other students were waiting as well. I told him that I was going to biology, just down the hall, but he informed me that there were no classes.

A rumor began in the classroom that a kid had been stabbed. Mr. Grant claimed to have heard a different story. Soon, another rumor began: a junior boy stabbed a senior boy in the senior spot bathroom. My heart began to race, and I tried unsuccessfully to convince myself that it wasn't one of my friends. I texted my friends furiously, trying to get any information I could, but no one was responding.

I couldn't focus on studying math, nor on the movie on sharks that was playing. An hour later, I got through to my friends who gave me the names of people they were with. My heart settled, but not completely. My parents called, having heard a news report, and let me know that the kid who was stabbed died. I hung up and informed the room.

Rumors flew regarding the identities of those involved. We learned it had occurred in the bathroom on main B, and that those involved were underclassmen. We found out that the perpetrator was named Jack, and went onto iPass to try to figure out his last name. Eventually, one kid stated with full assurance who the victim was; someone had seen him lying on the ground and was 100% sure.

We noticed the news van parked across the street and huddled around the windows. We went online to watch the news reports, but it only confirmed what we already knew.

Dr. Ritchie dismissed us all and I planned to meet my ride in the parking lot. As I walked by a boy who had been in the classroom with me, he told me that he had just seen the boy whom we had been told was the victim.

This experience has taught me to always tell the people you care about how you feel about them, because you never know when you won't be able to anymore.

Midge Callahan, faculty

Having talked with so many students in the last two days, I am struck how this tragedy for many has drawn them closer to the school. Although there were many that did not want to be here today, the overriding feeling of those that were here is that they still feel very safe and want nothing to change. Some said their parents just could not understand what they were going through and that they needed to be with other students and staff who could. Some parents who were here over the weekend felt a need to be here in the school because they had felt removed from what their kids were experiencing. I myself have felt uninterested in talking with my outside friends and family, though I so appreciate their caring and interest in how I am feeling. I feel drawn to the school, just wanting to embrace all my colleagues and all the kids. I love how we are all taking care of each other through this horribly challenging and tragic time.

Reflections Students and faculty

Shoshi Kahn-Woods, faculty

What is resonating for me these past few days is a plea to be patient, and not to make snap judgements. The many issues we are facing are complex and multi-layered. The "truth" is going to take a long time to sort out, and it's possible that we may never completely understand what happened. I'm hoping that we can approach healing with compassion for all the people involved, and try to think constructively, and not reactively, on how we support each other as individuals and as a community.

Tim Dingman, '07

Ever since I walked into the cafe at about 7:50 Friday morning, I have had the same feeling of emotional detachment from the recent events. I did not know the victim or the perpetrator. I did not see it happen. I was not even confronted by a member of the media. It feels like nothing surrounding the crime involves me in the least, except that I attend the school where it happened. Even when I saw the reports on TV, I felt like they were talking about a different school.

I am sorry if I seem callous or indifferent, but I just do not feel connected to the tragedy that unfolded last week. I completely understand the grief that people involved must feel, and I also understand that some people tend to be more emotional than others about events like these. I feel compassion to the farthest extent that logic can take me. However, I know that my sympathies cannot match the true emotion of the people closest to the incident. Some people may still need to grieve, but I hope that we can begin to move towards some sense of normalcy.

**Well it's too late,
tonight,
to drag the past out
into the light.
We're one,
but we're not the same.
We get to carry each other,
carry each other,
one.**

-One, U2

Eli Kahn-Woods, '09

For most of us, Friday morning was, at first, routine. As teachers ushered us out of the halls and into the cafeteria at 7:45, the half-filled lunch room quickly became overpopulated. None of us were aware of the tragic events happening one floor above.

As time went on, a slight uneasiness began to fill the room. Reasons for the confinement were unknown except for the rumors of "lockdown drills" and "accidents." Minutes later we saw a stretcher being quickly escorted through the A-B connector, followed by an announcement from Dr. Ritchie that a stabbing had occurred. We were assured that the perpetrator was in custody and we were safe. The horrific announcement brought even more confusion to the shocked cafe as we frantically searched for friends. We were reassured that many of our fellow students were in classrooms and offices.

Within an hour, those of us in the cafe moved into the gym. We waited for news of either boys' identity and called parents to inform them that we were safe. Confusion, fear and frustration contributed to a sense of restlessness as we became desperate for information. By 10:30, we solemnly filed from the gym with only the knowledge that there had been a horrible tragedy at our school. We returned home to the gruesome details being played on every TV station, and to start the grieving process with friends and family.

Isabel Zuckoff, '07

Friday began differently for me. For the first time, I had detention. So instead of arriving at school around 7:40, I was sitting in East House by 7:13.

As my detention was ending, I started hearing "Call 911!" on Ms. Johnson's walkie-talkie and people yelling for a First Aid kit. Soon after, teachers began running in and out of East House saying that the hallways had to be cleared and students needed to be locked in classrooms. Naturally, I thought that everyone in east house – four other students, a mom waiting to speak to a guidance counselor, and myself – were safe. Mr. Sarapas had already run in and out of the House frantically searching for a facebook. I still didn't know what was going on, but it was clear he was trying to identify someone involved.

Mr. Ryrie marched through the door holding the arm of a tall, thin boy with glasses, a brown hat and a floor-length trench coat with blood smeared on it. The boy's arms hung free at his side. I had seen him around school but I didn't know who he was. I heard him say things like: "It was a mistake! I shouldn't have!" The boy also asked Mr. Ryrie: "Is he okay? Is he still alive?"

For about three minutes this boy was within six feet of me and the other students until Mr. Ryrie unlocked the door to Ms. Gray's office. Mr. Ryrie then pushed him inside and left the door ajar. When an officer came in he began referring to the boy in the office as a "prisoner." We were escorted into the room next to the one with the boy and the officers. Still unaware of the extremity of the situation, we were informed, "Someone is badly hurt and that is all that is known." We were told that we needed to wait in that office until the building was safe again.

Finally, we were led downstairs, through caution tape, to the cafeteria. Along the way, I heard a police officer mention a knife. Reunited with the majority of L-S students, I heard rumors flying. No one knew what was going on. It wasn't until people started contacting parents that the situation started to become clear. When we were finally let out of school, the full impact of James' death hadn't hit me yet. It wasn't until around 5:00, when I began watching the news, that the whole thing started to hit.

I cried all night and most of the following day. It seemed impossible. I felt as if I was watching a movie, or that the news was about a killing of a student in a different town, in a different state, somewhere far away from the safe cocoon of L-S. But now that it has sunk in, I am even more heartbroken and distressed. My heart goes out to his friends and family and all those who knew him, all those who love him, and all of us who never had the privilege of knowing him.

Sara Edwards, '08

It's 6:46. I woke up late again, the roads are icy, and I forgot to do my math homework. What a morning. By 7:19 I'm finally out the door. Minutes pass, and I'm quickly passed by multiple police cruisers, an ambulance, sirens blaring. I assume it is a car accident, but that idea leaves as quickly as it came when I find that all they are all pulling into the front of L-S.

The next several hours are a blur. What had started out like a normal day soon turned into a morning I will never forget. I was herded into the cafeteria before I had the chance to ask what was happening. The rumors were flying. "Someone got stabbed!" "Are you sure they caught him?" "It was two sophomores." "No, one of them was 17, so it must have been an upperclassmen." I tried to stay close to my friends so that I could find strength in my loved ones. No one seemed to know what was going on, and everyone was looking for answers.

Once we moved to the gym, everything became clearer. The rumors seemed to spread faster; at one point I even heard that a friend of mine was involved. While this rumor proved to be false, I was completely restless and wanted to know the truth.

I went to a friend's house after school, and we watched the news together as the media smeared pictures of our peaceful town on television screens across the nation. The reporters filled the area around the school, and spread to the neighborhoods of students who had been involved.

That night, at a memorial candlelight vigil, we were able to mourn together, reflect on the past events, and gather our feelings to make sense of the day. We sang songs of hope, and some students knelt down to pray. I tried to maintain my composure, but with the sense of acceptance and understanding that filled the atmosphere, I knew it was alright to be upset. I have faith in L-S because we are a strong community, and like a family, can find enough strength to empower us in the coming days.

EDITORIAL POINTS

Despite confusion & hurt, we want to say...

Like most in the Lincoln-Sudbury community, many thoughts crowd our minds. Here are a few of them:

■ **L-S is still “a different kind of place.”** It is known for its conscientious student body, unique student-teacher relationships, and the granting of responsibility and freedom to students. L-S prides itself on these characteristics, and when a crisis developed, the community showed that it deserved its reputation. On Friday, January 19, students were supporting teachers just as teachers were supporting students. Age and title disappeared as both groups looked to each other to try to understand what was going on. As the situation became clearer, they looked to each other for comfort, and support was freely given.

When bad things happen, many people want to react immediately without truly understanding the situation. We worry that measures suggested by some – metal detectors, security cameras, having study hall and homeroom, and closing campus – would serve only to falsely reassure. A lack of metal detectors and homeroom did not cause Friday’s event. Implementing superficial measures will minutely improve security, but at the cost of damaging critical aspects of Lincoln-Sudbury’s culture. L-S has always been a school that defines itself by the responsibility it grants to its students, and if this is taken away, it will no longer prepare its students for the freedom and responsibility of post-high school life. Students thrive at L-S because they love to come to a school where they are respected as individu-

als and seen as valuable members of the community. Hasty measures would undermine our school philosophy. L-S would lose a part of its soul.

■ **People respond differently to tragedy.** Members of the community should be careful before deeming certain actions and attitudes as “insensitive.” Everyone has their own method of grieving, and what is appropriate to some may seem inappropriate to others. Be cautious in your judgments.

■ **We are disappointed in the major media.** They have let their search for an angle overshadow the humanity and complexity of the situation. While we understand the commercial reality of the news industry, we refuse to accept that it is necessary to turn this situation into a spectacle. Reporters accosting students for quotes and twisting their words to fit into the press’ story is giving journalism a bad name. Current media reports are making it all too easy for people who do not know the true character of this school to misjudge it.

■ **Our gratitude to many people is boundless.** Dr. Ritchie, the L-S staff, and everyone who has donated their services and support- thank you so much. Your strength and leadership has made this seemingly impossible situation more manageable for the students.

■ **This is a very difficult time for everyone.** We would like to acknowledge that two families are grieving, and that we have lost two members of our community. Our thoughts and prayers are with both families.

Grief counselor writes to L-S students

There are times when I am asked to write an article about grief and loss, and I am able to go directly to *My Documents* and pull something out of there. However, this is different; you are different. I came to L-S on Friday as a stranger to your community in an effort to guide you as you began your grief journey, but I left Monday morning having met some very good folks who care deeply about you and what you are going through right now. Your strong commitment to each other will be your strength in the days ahead.

However, some of you may have questions about your grief. What is exactly is grief? What are “normal” feelings for a young adult to have? How long does it last? Are there right and wrong ways to grieve and mourn a loss? How do we comfort others as they grieve?

Grief is the feelings you have about a loss you have experienced. The loss can be a person, an object, such as a home after a

fire, or a sense of ourselves, for example our sense of safety after September 11. Grieving is good because it shows how we are connected to our world. You will always have certain feelings about losses in your lives, and so you will always grieve.

However, grief reactions usually do lessen in severity and length. For example, you may have cried uncontrollably for a very long time after a loss, but as you continue on your grief journey, you may only cry or get sad every so often. How does that happen? Well, to be honest with you, time alone *does not* heal all wounds. Learn how to express your grief in a healthy way. Having people you can speak with when you are struggling with a loss can provide the care you need. It can be a friend, parent, the teachers and counselors at L-S, or your priest, rabbi or minister. You can artistically express your grief by writing, drawing, painting, or sculpting. I would be remiss if I didn’t add that although this pe-

riod may be very sad and stressful, drinking and using drugs is not a smart way to lessen the pain you may feel in your grief.

Everyone grieves differently and it is important to be patient and understanding as others express their grief. For young adults, the usual grief reactions are emotional, including crying or feeling sad and lonely. Oftentimes, teenagers express that they think they are the only ones who feel a certain way. Talk to each other; ask how the other is doing. If you’re not sleeping well or find yourself sleeping too much, talk to someone about this. Don’t isolate yourselves in your grief.

You will never forget what happened last Friday at L-S; I don’t think you should. Instead, take this experience, as you should every experience and use it to become a more compassionate and understanding young adult. I wish you the very best and will keep you in my thoughts.

-Diane Moran, Certified grief counselor

Unforgettable day at L-S

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for the safety of their children and were reassured that all the students in the school were completely safe.

At about 9:00, the students who had been waiting in the cafeteria were moved to Gym 1, where they waited alongside faculty for more information.

Other students and teachers continued to wait in locked classrooms and offices around the school.

Students who had been turned away from school, or who had not come because they had already received word of what was transpiring at the school, watched the news intently for information concerning the situation at L-S.

Many of these students, as well as parents of students at the school, began to call their children with outside information that they had heard or seen on the news.

By around 10:00, most of the students knew that the victim’s injuries had been fatal, and although almost no one knew for sure the identities of either the perpetrator or the victim, speculation ran rampant. Students sat in the bleachers or stood on the court of the main gym discussing the tragedy and wondering about the specific details of the incident.

At about 10:20, Dr. Ritchie came onto the loudspeaker once again to inform students that they were to proceed to the buses and the parking lot to go home. He also announced that they had the option to stay at school if they wished to discuss the tragedy with teachers, counselors, or fellow students. Most students went home or to their friends’ houses to watch the news and find information posted on Facebook or other Internet sites in order to get the whole story.

Later, at 7:00 p.m., students held a candlelight vigil in front of L-S in memory of James Alenson.

At the same time, Dr. Ritchie made a statement to an auditorium filled with L-S students, parents, and community members, mostly addressing the issue of grief and healing in the community. Several parents voiced their concerns about security in the school, and Dr. Ritchie assured them that these issues would be addressed in time.

Additionally, several L-S students spoke to the gathering about how safe they felt, about their positive feelings for L-S, and how good a job they thought Dr. Ritchie and staff were doing in this situation.

The school was open through the weekend for counseling. Hundreds of concerned students, parents and staff gathering for counseling or just to give each other support.

On Monday, the start of school was pushed back two hours, so that faculty members could meet to discuss Friday’s events and plan together for the week ahead and the delayed exam week.

At 9:45, Dr. Ritchie addressed the entire L-S community that had been packed into the gym. He spoke of how heartened he was by the maturity of the student response to the tragedy and the wonderful expressions of support for the school he had received from students and parents.

He also spoke about how the school need to find a balance between grieving and achieving a sense of normalcy. He then called for unity in the community, rather than a divisive “blaming” mentality. A grief counselor spoke briefly.

Dr. Ritchie ended this unusual all-school assembly by asking first for a moment of silence for James Alenson. He then called for a round of applause for L-S and the entire staff. A standing ovation followed.

Abbreviated classes began at 10:30.

THE FORUM

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Advice for dealing with trauma

The following is advice from the Metro Boston Critical Incident Stress Management Team about how to cope with the effects of stressful events. Most important: do not hesitate to see your house counselor.

- Within the first 24-48 hours, periods of mild, aerobic exercise alternating with relaxation will alleviate some of the physical and emotional reactions.
- Structure your time: keep busy.
- Make as many every day decisions as possible that will give you a feeling of control over your life.
- You’re normal and having normal reactions: do not label yourself as crazy.
- Be aware of numbing the pain with overuse of drugs or alcohol. Don’t complicate this event with a substance abuse problem.

- Reach out – people do care.
- Spend time with people who make you feel good.
- Give yourself permission to feel rotten.
- Help yourself and others by sharing feelings and checking out how they are doing. But remember not to smother others.
- Get plenty of rest. When you can’t sleep, think about writing down your thoughts to release them.
- Don’t make any life changing decisions during or immediately after a critical incident.
- Recurring thoughts, dreams or flashbacks are very common. Talk to someone.
- Eat well-balanced meals, even if you may not feel very hungry.

THE FORUM

We are all in this together

L-S students, alumni share their thoughts

Andrew Corwin, '08

The fact of the matter is that L-S is so accepting that even if you did not know James, you mourned.... The L-S community came together at short notice and the candle-light vigil was awe-inspiring. The candles, the singing, and the coming together. It was not just one clique or the other. Every clique was there. We will never forget. We are one. R.I.P. James Alenson.

Lexi Roopenian, '09

I never would have thought that this would happen in our accepting community, and it is a day that will never be forgotten. Losing someone is the hardest thing a person can endure, especially when a parent loses a child; that's simply unnatural, and nobody deserves to go through that. James, his family, and his friends are in my prayers.

Tory Kittelsen, '08

I never would have expected something like this to happen at L-S. The whole thing is just so surreal. I can't even imagine what the families of James and John are going through right now. My sympathies to all of them.

Wilson Roberts, '10

I have heard nothing but good things about James, and his death is truly horrific. I know that James is in a better place now and he is probably looking down on us, wanting us to band together to make sure this never happens again. May God look over his body in the Kingdom of Heaven. Rest in peace.

Sherry Sybertz, L-S '06

I went to L-S for four years (I graduated in 2006), and L-S always felt like a home to me.... I was absolutely horrified when I heard the news. I didn't know how to react that, as a community, L-S had to go through this tragedy. I don't know what this world is coming to. It does make me feel better to see all of L-S coming together as a community in this tragic time.

I always have, and always will see L-S as a "different kind of place"...as a community, both in Lincoln, Sudbury, and Boston and as a community with alumni across the country, we have come together. That is why L-S is that different kind of place.

Sarah Freeman, '09

The most important thing right now is to remember James...from all the kind words people have said about him I think what he would want most is for people not be bickering over the motive of the killer but to take something good from his death. I think that the best thing to do is just be supportive of each other right now and not focus on the details of his death. My thoughts are to the families of both boys, because two lives have been ruined today.

Carly Shortell, '09

My first reaction to what happened was complete shock, but with time it's becoming more and more real. I don't think anyone ever thought something like this could happen, but it did; and it is such a tragedy. I feel the most important thing is that we never forget. My thoughts go to him and his family. Rest in Peace.

Cameron Jackson, '07

When I finally heard about what had actually happened on Friday I was deeply saddened. It's sad to think that James was only 15, and there are all these things in life he'll never get to do. No one deserves to be taken from this earth in the manner that he was. This is a horrible tragedy and I grieve for both parties.

I think it has also opened our eyes to the fact that violence can happen anywhere and to anyone. Also, that it doesn't see class, race or identity: it just consumes the life taken by it, and affects all those who are left to wonder why.

Michael McGovern, L-S '74

News of the tragedy at L-S has reached me in Florida. Please know that many, many people are with all of you in spirit as you work to heal yourself, to help each other cope, and to lead the L-S community forward.

I believe times like these, horrible as they are, can serve to bring people together, which is the most important part of human life.

Ben Rifkin, '08

Yesterday felt surreal. If you had asked me if something like this would have or could have happened at L-S on any day before Friday morning, I would have said absolutely not.

I have to say that I couldn't be more proud to be a part of the L-S community. I believe that in a time like this having a sense of security and community couldn't be more important.

My heart goes out to all of the close family and friends of James, and everyone who was affected by this tragic event.

Amy Wald, '08

The death of James Alenson was a shock to us all, and we will never forget him. The fact that such a kind, smart, and caring person's life was cut so short is nothing less than devastating.

As I've been searching for some sense in this whole situation...I am in awe. The fact that so many Lincoln-Sudbury students, as well as students from other schools, have come together to share their feelings, support each other, and think of ways to honor James, makes me very hopeful.

The strong feelings of love and support in our community at this time give me hope for the future. James' death will never be forgotten by the Lincoln and Sudbury communities. My hope is that, as a community, we can continue to come together like we have in these past few days, to support each other, honor James, and think of ways to better our community.

Taryn Beatty, '09

When I first got to school and heard what happened, I was in complete shock. I could not believe that something this terrible had happened at L-S. Then after we were sent home, I kept seeing the story on all of the news stations and it hit me that it really happened. I mean, that day James was just getting up expecting it to be a regular day.

I feel terribly for [James'] family as well as that of the suspect. Hopefully, L-S can band together and get through this tragedy. R.I.P. James, our thoughts are with you always.

Jonathan Mueller, L-S '05

I do not currently attend L-S, but I spent four years there. Obviously I did not know him, but I do feel for his family's loss. One thing that I feel is important, however, is how L-S responds to this tragedy. It is important for the students, parents, and faculty not to overreact.

One of the most enjoyable parts of L-S for me was the freedom and trust the students had earned from the administration. Being able to freely walk through the halls, relax almost anywhere in the school, and go off campus during free blocks were some of the best parts of my high school experiences.

Losing those aspects would repudiate L-S's great claim to be "a different kind of place." It would be a shame for me to come back and visit, only to see metal detectors, security guards, and hall monitors. Safety is obviously important, but it would be keen to keep the liberties that made L-S more like a college.

Nathalie Reyes, '10

[James] was in my Wellness class and he really didn't like to cause any trouble; he was a really nice kid and one of my friends knew him as a great friend. It was horrible that he died like this...

A little of James will live on in all of us: his friends, his family and other students of L-S.

Lise Ann Caldara, '08

I feel completely empty inside. An eerie silence has drifted over our community as we all sit in shock. I wish things had been different for James and for John. But for now we must support one another in this time of need and we must try as hard as we can to see the light in such a dark, morbid day. Until today, most of us had been taking our lives for granted. And now, our eyes are opened to reality.

Life is short. It could have been any one of us who was murdered. But it wasn't; it was James. Let us never forget you, James Alenson – God bless you and your loved ones. You will never leave our hearts.

Gerald McElroy, L-S '05

I never imagined I'd see the words "Lincoln-Sudbury" and "murder" in the same sentence as a top story in the national news.

When I received a text message during my Friday morning class from a high school friend, I immediately ran back to my room and spent hours searching the Internet and talking on the phone. I couldn't fathom something so horrific occurring within the walls of my safe high school in small-town Massachusetts and felt pained for James' family and the entire community. The one positive thing to note is the sense of unity and the strong connection we (recent L-S alums) feel to the school; we adore LSRHS and share in the joy and pain of anything that occurs there. In spite of this isolated incident, we're confident L-S will retain its unique culture. Even in the darkest of days, I couldn't be prouder to call myself a graduate of such an incredible high school.

Zack Shapiro, '09

[James] was so innocent, and all he did was come to school. You never think that something like this is going to happen at your school, especially a school like L-S, where everyone gets along very well. I just hope that something like what happened never happens again.

Jason Goldfarb, '10

What can you say about something as horrific as the events that unfolded early Friday morning, January 19, 2007? You can defend the victim, the killer, or the school, or you can just stand by and grieve the loss of a terrific kid.

James Alenson was a great kid.... He was in my math class and arrived early, just like me, so I befriended him. Mind you, we were not best friends, but we talked and enjoyed listening to Ms. Bieler discuss upcoming math tests.... He was very quiet, and yet he had a vibe about him that seemed to declare that he was a nice, trustworthy kid.

When I found out who had died I was shocked. Who would do something like that to such a kid?...Don't get me wrong, I felt and still feel completely safe at L-S. There are many ways this tragedy could have been prevented and can be prevented further, but for now the important thing to do is mourn the loss of an outstanding guy. My, as well as the community's, hearts go out to the Alenson family.

Jess Webb, '07

This tragic event at Lincoln-Sudbury Regional High School has shown, yet again, the strength and unification of students and faculty at this amazing place. Dr. Ritchie is doing an amazing job handling the situation, and right now I believe what we need most is to support one another. It is hard to watch a school like this struggle, and quiver in the face of reality, but the truth is this thing happens, we just never thought it would happen to us.

Jessica Sommerville, '08

I am still overcome by shock that this happened. You sometimes hear about this happening, but you never expect it to occur at your school.

My heart reaches out to not only James and his family, but also John and his family. I hope John uses this memory to shape himself to become a better person, and perhaps help prevent kids in the future from making the same mistake.