

Greek-American Places Crosses for 2nd Anniversary of Las Vegas Shooting



A reading of victims' names at the time bullets flew two years ago marked the end on October 1 of the second anniversary of a shooting that killed 58 people at a country music festival on the Las Vegas Strip. Greek-American Greg Zanis, who made wooden crosses with victims' names and photos, put them up again at the iconic "Welcome to Fabulous Las Vegas" sign.

"Those lives were senselessly taken," Las Vegas Mayor Carolyn Goodman told a hushed audience crowded into a garden of mementoes, photos and trees planted just days after the deadliest mass shooting in modern American history.

"Without any cause or purpose," the mayor continued, "leaving families and loved ones broken, so many injured and so permanently scarred. And all of the rest of us absolutely devastated."

A candle was lit and a bell tolled as each name was read. In the end, a bugle playing "Taps" echoed the mournful sound of the same song that echoed over

another service just after sunrise.

“No anniversary is more terrible than the one that recalls how your neighbors and guests were so wantonly slain, even while their hearts were singing out in joy as they listened to music with their friends and loved ones,” Joe Robbins said at that gathering.

The father of 20-year-old Quinton Robbins spoke of his son, a city recreation worker who died when a gunman rained gunfire from a high-rise hotel into a crowd of 22,000 on Oct. 1, 2017.

Nevada Gov. Steve Sisolak recalled cellphones ringing unanswered as he joined officials who walked the scene where a concert had turned to horror and people fell bleeding as they ran to escape a hail of bullets and tried to save people they loved.

He closed his comments with a note of hope.

“Beyond the neon signs, we are a city of neighbors that look out for each other,” he said.

Angela and Al McIlldoon, parents of Jordan McIlldoon, a 23-year-old from Maple Ridge, British Columbia, who died in the shooting, attended both the sunrise and after-dark services.

They wore matching NHL Vegas Golden Knights jerseys, No. 58, with the name “Jordy Mac” on the back.

“We feel the need to be here for our son,” Al McIlldoon said. “We’ll keep coming every year.”

Steve Darling and Judy Gardner of Ontario, California, wore T-shirts with the name of Judy’s daughter, Dana Gardner, a 52-year-old mother of three enjoying the music with her own daughter when she died.

They said they planned to join hands with survivors and other families of victims at the concert venue across the Las Vegas Strip from the Mandalay Bay resort-casino, where the shooter unleashed his attack.

MGM Resorts International, owner of the hotel and the venue, has announced plans to convert the now-shuttered concert space to parking while it plans a community center and a place to remember victims.

The Vegas Strong Resiliency Center, which offers financial help, counseling

referrals and legal aid for those affected by the shooting, promoted daylong outreach wellness programs.

“Everyone heals differently,” said Terri Keener, behavioral health coordinator at the center, as she and co-worker Jacqueline Harris awaited the 10:05 p.m. ceremony.

Keener said she believed 10,000 victims, survivors, relatives and traumatized first-responders have sought help in the last two years.

The shooting lasted nearly 11 minutes before gunman Stephen Paddock killed himself as police closed in. Police and the FBI found the 64-year-old retired accountant and high-stakes video poker player meticulously planned the attack, and they theorized that he may have sought notoriety. But they said they never found a clear motive.

Police recovered 23 assault-style weapons, including 14 fitted with bump stock attachments that allow firearms to fire rapidly like machine guns. The Trump administration banned the devices in March.

Nevada and some other states have tightened gun laws in the two years since the shooting, including passing “red flag” measures that allow a judge to order weapons be taken from someone who is deemed a threat.

Gun control advocates say they’re frustrated more hasn’t been done.

Two prominent gun control organizations will host a forum Wednesday in Las Vegas for 10 leading Democratic presidential candidates focusing on the issue.

Efforts to combat gun violence follow other recent mass shootings, including at a Florida high school last year that killed 17 and attacks in Texas and Ohio that killed 31 people in one weekend this summer.

“It’s a shame that it takes more and more of these shootings to bring attention to a topic,” said Liz Becker, a volunteer with the gun control advocacy group Moms Demand Action.

But “I do think that the tide is turning,” she said.

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By Ken Ritter, Associated Press

Associated Press writer Michelle L. Price in Las Vegas contributed to this report.

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