

Humble, Texas, to take on the Houston Lamar Redskins in the Class 5A playoffs. The game had already been postponed once and it was raining again, but the game was set to take place at 5 p.m. in Humble. Unfortunately, the team never made it to the game.

Around 2 p.m., about 28 miles from home in Devers, Texas, the chartered bus carrying the team, the coach and one parent chaperone swerved to miss debris that had fallen off a truck in front of them. The bus rolled onto its side into a muddy ditch.

Sadly, senior Alicia Bonura and sophomore Ashley Brown lost their lives in this tragedy. Six other girls were hospitalized in serious condition. Goalie Devin Martindale lost her arm in this accident. The other five girls were Lauree Thibaut, Allison Forman, Sarah Beach, Courtney Garrod, and Sarah Babin. Two of those girls have been released from the hospital and are back home.

News of the accident quickly spread back to the town and West Brook students set up a vigil in the high school gymnasium where friends and faculty prayed and hoped for the best. Soon the students were hit with the horrendous news that two of their own had been killed in this catastrophe.

According to the Beaumont Enterprise, the girls are remembered for "loving soccer, loving their school and loving everyone they came in touch with."

Alicia Bonura, in addition to playing soccer, had played basketball, she ran cross-country, and was a trainer for the West Brook football team. She played the drums in the band and sometimes she sang vocals as well. She is remembered for her wonderful laugh and a smile that would light up a room. She was ranked number five in her class of 535, and she recently decided to attend Texas A&M University to study mechanical engineering.

On her MySpace Web page she wrote: "I love to smile and love life in general and I love God. He is such a fantastic guy." Under people she would like to meet, she writes, "I can't wait to meet God." Moving words from one of God's children.

Ashley Brown was a freckle-faced girl with long red hair. Her friends said she always made people laugh and was a free spirit and had a smile that would light up a room. Her teachers said that her fellow students gravitated to her. She was an active member in her youth ministry at her church, Calvary Baptist. Besides soccer, she loved singing, playing volleyball, skiing and playing the electric guitar.

Ashley had a bulletin board in her home covered in photos and memorabilia. In the middle of the board there was a handwritten note stating the following: "You can't choose how you are going to die, but you can choose how you are going to live."

Mr. Speaker, in her 16 years on Earth, Ashley Brown lived life to the fullest, and she is going to be missed.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this moment to extend prayers and condolences to Alicia's and Ashley's parents, relatives, friends, and the community of Beaumont, Texas, the students and teachers and the coaches at West Brook High School and the Bruins girls soccer team. We hope that they find happiness in their fond memories of these special girls.

Alicia and Ashley truly led remarkable lives. They clearly touched so many people in their short time on Earth. Heaven is certainly brighter with Alicia and Ashley there, and the community of Beaumont Texas should take comfort. They now have two extra guardian angels looking down on them.

Mr. Speaker, that's just the way it is.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PALLONE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. PALLONE addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

COSTS OF GUN VIOLENCE

Mrs. MCCARTHY. Mr. Speaker, I ask permission to take the time of the gentleman from New Jersey.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without objection, the gentlewoman is recognized for 5 minutes.

There was no objection.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. MCCARTHY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mrs. MCCARTHY. Mr. Speaker, every week I stand here and talk about commonsense approaches to reducing gun violence in this country. And yet this body sees fit to chip away at existing gun laws. So tonight I want to talk about the effects of gun violence in terms that everybody in this body can understand, dollars and cents.

Throughout America, our States are experiencing extraordinary budget problems, forcing them to cut spending on many important initiatives. A great deal of these budget woes are caused by skyrocketing health care costs, and the continued cuts to Medicaid aren't going to help the situation.

Of course, Congress will not allow funding for the Centers for Disease Control to study the true economic cost of gun violence, so we have to use data from independent sources.

Independent sources have shown gun violence costs our economy over \$100 billion every year. In fact, each gun death costs our economy \$2.8 million. Gun violence increases law enforcement spending. Gun violence costs the economy billions in lost productivity. And while Congress won't let us learn the exact amount, gun violence costs our health care system more than \$2 billion every single year.

Since gun violence plagues so many low-income communities, victims are often uninsured. And who picks up the

tab for uninsured victims of gun violence? American taxpayers, that's who. So even if you don't think about gun violence as an important issue, you are paying for it.

It is obvious something must be done, and it is also obvious that this body has no plans to intervene in this public health crisis. So it is up to our local communities and neighborhoods.

Across the country people are fed up, but they are trying to make a difference in their own area. I have been to many events that have had politicians, school officials, law enforcement officers and others telling young people about the dangers of guns. But not once has anybody turned the microphone around and asked the kids what do they think.

So many young people live on the front lines of the gun violence epidemic. The rhetoric on both sides of this issue must stop, and we must start to learn to listen.

This isn't about the second amendment; this isn't about kids dying. Many of the people who disagree with my views on the gun issue will say, Guns don't kill people; people do.

But what that doesn't mean is we can't take steps to make sure guns don't fall into the hands of the wrong people. This isn't about taking away guns from law-abiding citizens who hunt or shoot skeet, nor is it about depriving law-abiding citizens from defending themselves and their families. In fact, we can save so many lives without affecting a single lawful gun owner in this country.

This is about keeping guns away from felons and gang members. This is about making sure our police departments have the tools they need to track down illegal guns. This isn't about running honest gun dealers out of business. It is about cracking down on the 1 percent of corrupt gun dealers who sell 57 percent of the guns used in crimes.

Gun rights advocates have as much stake in this as anybody else. Many see gun violence as an inner-city problem. But let's not forget that gang violence and drug crime also started out as an inner-city problem. We acted too late, and now gangs and drugs are commonplace in suburbs and rural communities.

So as we head home for the spring recess, I ask my colleagues to do something we don't do very often or very well: listen. It is time to listen to the people being affected by gun violence. Listen to our young people in underserved communities. Listen to our police departments who are losing officers to illegal guns every week. And listen to the families who have lost loved ones due to gun violence.

The answers to this epidemic of gun violence do not reside in this Chamber or on K Street, but in the hearts and minds of the people that we represent. It is time that they are heard.