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Wednesday, April 21, 2004

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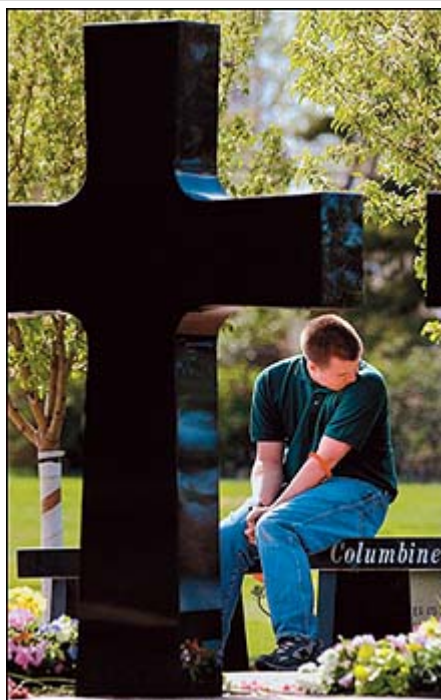
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## 'Beacons of hope'

On the fifth anniversary of the Columbine tragedy, kin, classmates and the community celebrate the victims' lives and take stock of their own

By [George Merritt](#) and [Kieran Nicholson](#) and [John Ingold](#)  
Denver Post Staff Writers



Post / Helen Richardson

Aaron Delay, 22, of Littleton contemplates a memorial for Columbine victims at Olinger Chapel Hill Cemetery on Tuesday, the fifth anniversary of the shootings. Delay was a Littleton High School student on April 20, 1999.

- [LuAnne and Kristine Padgett](#)
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to realize what is important, and I feel that that's what's going to happen ...," Lauren wrote. "I feel it may happen in my

lifetime."

Everyone who heard knows that now.

JEFFERSON COUNTY - Dawn Anna stood strong at the lectern Tuesday against a steady wind and buckling emotion, steeled by the strength of her message.

Anna, who lost daughter Lauren Townsend in the Columbine High School rampage, spoke on the fifth anniversary of the tragedy about memories of those who died and obligations of those who survived.

And, for the first time publicly, she read words from her daughter's diary.

"Unfortunately, it usually takes a huge trauma to get people

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On Tuesday, nearly 1,000 people came to Clement Park near Columbine High School to mourn and reflect on the carnage that cost 13 innocent lives.

Amid a wind that billowed as if to wipe the demons of the past away, those in attendance took part in a memorial that was more about celebrating the lives of those lost and those who survived and less about recalling the horror of April 20, 1999.

<p><b>COLUMBINE TRAGEDY</b></p>
<p><b>ONLINE EXTRAS</b></p> <p><a href="#">Click here</a> for an archive of The Denver Post's coverage of recent news concerning the Columbine High School massacre as well as documents and online extras.</p> <p><a href="#">Click here</a> for the Columbine Memorial website.</p> <p><a href="#">Click here</a> for the Jefferson County Public Library's collection of materials related to the Columbine tragedy.</p> <p><a href="#">Click here</a> for Columbine High School's website.</p>

Do not let the awful past consume your future, Anna told the gathering. But do not forget what the tragedy and those who died taught you.

"I urge all of us who have survived that day to become living memorials following these beacons of hope whose lights cannot be extinguished," she said.

Five years ago, two Columbine students rampaged through the school with guns, killing 12 students and a beloved teacher and wounding more than 20 others before killing themselves.

Tuesday's remembrance started with a jet flyover and closed with a candlelight vigil in the park. In between there were familiar faces, mournful reflection and comforting words.

Columbine graduates Steve and John Cohen sang their song "Friend of Mine," which became an anthem for healing in the tragedy's aftermath. Columbine principal Frank DeAngelis slowly read the names of the 13 killed that day, as bells tolled.

Doves were released.

Anne Marie Hochhalter, a Columbine student who was severely injured in the tragedy, spoke of the wide-ranging impact the event has had.

"Columbine affected each and every one of us in a way that is incredible," she said.

Anna, in her speech, painted vivid images, using the present tense, of each of the 13 killed. She didn't name them as she went - but those who knew them didn't need her to.

"These are the images, the living images, of our precious 13," she said, then naming each one, "not as we saw them, but as we see them."

The Clement Park observance was the largest ceremony on a day during which Columbine was on many people's minds.

Away from the bigger ceremony, Sarah Arzola laid flowers on the grave of Rachel Scott, the friend she lost five years ago.

Like the rest of the people who trickled through the Columbine Memorial Garden at Olinger Chapel Hill Mortuary and Cemetery in Littleton on Tuesday, Arzola said she came to ensure that Scott and the 12 others killed that day will always be remembered.

"Sometimes it feels like it was yesterday," Arzola said. "Sometimes it feels like it was 20 years ago. I think everyone has really tried to move on. ... You don't want to forget them, but you don't want to dwell on what happened."

Michael Tamburello said there are thousands of people who were once strangers to Columbine whose lives changed.

"Other than living in (nearby) Littleton, I had absolutely no connection to the school," he said.

But since the shootings, he has helped create a nonprofit group to support the victims and produced a spiritual CD in their honor. He visits the memorial at Chapel Hill Cemetery regularly.

"I think the people who were moved by this, they're not coming from a worldly position," Tamburello said. "All good that has come out of this; all the blessings, there are so many people who now lead a more godly life."

Early Tuesday afternoon, a few people walked through Clement Park casually, past the crowd of media and the equipment for the evening vigil. Many people were there to enjoy the sunny day - some flying kites, some swinging on the swings.

But Columbine was on everybody's mind.

"I just wanted to see," said Marie Aguilar, who brought her 6-year-old son to the park.

Aguilar said her son, Rick, had asked her why there was going to be a memorial service. She said she wanted to teach him about what happened and to teach him the

lessons from the tragedy.

Out of the public remembrances and personal reflections came a sense that this day is not about the terror of the past, but about the promise of what the community can accomplish for the future.

"We can show we are strong," Hochhalter said to close her speech. "And we can get through anything with the help of God, family and friends."

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