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The Anniversary. A Year Later-Life in Sandy Hook, CT

Tue, 2013-12-10 11:24 — Robin Olson

The "Anniversary" approaches. We here in Sandy Hook, Connecticut don't need more of a description than that. We know the anniversary referred to is of the horrific shooting that happened at Sandy Hook Elementary School last December 14, 2012. It was a tragedy that wiped away the lives of 20 children and 8 adults.



©2013 Robin A.F. Olson. One of the thousands of messages sent to help Newtown heal.

I realize some folks would have difficulty that I include the 2 people who caused this horror in my tally—the 1 who actually pulled the trigger and the other who arrogantly had an arsenal of guns in her suburban home combined with a son who she KNEW had mental illness and severe social issues. They died, too. The horror that occurred is unforgivable, but I gently suggest that after a year has passed, perhaps it's time to include those people in our heartbreak and include them in our mourning as we struggle to move forward.



©2013 Robin A.F. Olson.

What we have learned in twelve months is that people love our town. People who didn't even know where Connecticut was, let alone Sandy Hook, sent us truckloads of letters and cards expressing their sentiments. These people are from all over the world, who just wanted to let us know how much they cared. They reached out to us and held us. They gave us gifts. They donated many millions of dollars to funds that go to the families of the fallen, that will help our town government run and more (*GE "donated" 5 employees to our town to help our First Selectman with anything she needed*).



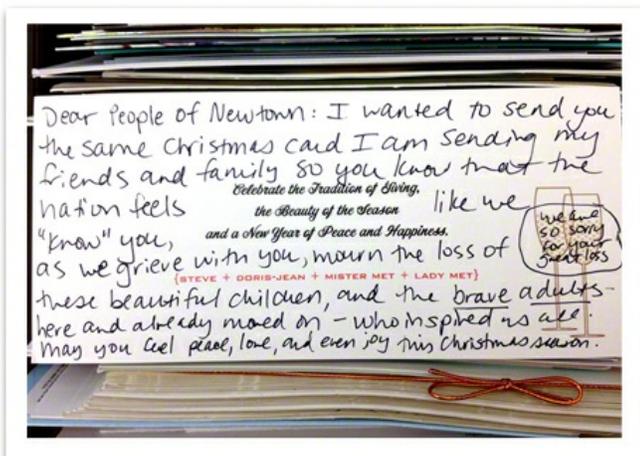
©2013 Robin A.F. Olson. Love, the theme of so many messages of support.

As the sheath of heartbreak begins to fall away, what lies beneath that is what has been their all along-love; love that we may have previously held close, that we protected, fearful to express it. It was a love we may not have felt we had enough to share, but with the tragedy behind us, this love has grown bigger and grander and more open and fearless. It is more welcoming and accepting than any love we have ever known. It is because we don't try to forget what happened, we use it as a reminder to cherish our fragile lives and the lives of everyone around us. It reminds us to not be afraid to reach out a hand and offer it to a stranger, not asking for anything in return, but having confidence that helping others helps us, too.



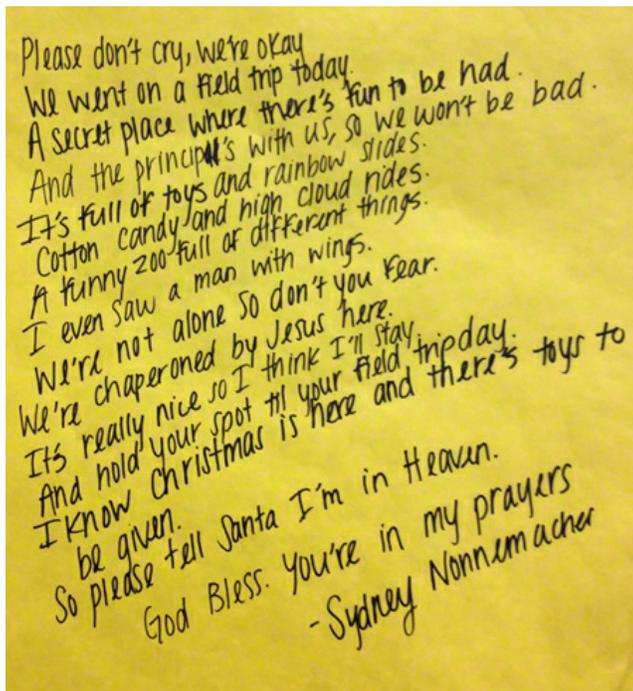
©2013 Robin A.F. Olson.

Our town is already bracing for an onslaught of media coverage. Pat Llodra, our First Selectman, asks them to stay away and let us grieve in peace. The local Catholic church has signs in their yard warning: "No Media Beyond this Point! Police Take Notice." In some ways I agree with that request, but for one reason I disagree. **I would like the media to come here and focus not on the pain, but on the ways we have been helping each other and to use the media to remind others to mark this sad day by doing at least one good thing for a stranger. The families of the fallen ask for 26 acts of kindness, 1 for each person who was killed, and they ask that everyone do these things for people in their own community. We don't need more things here, we need more love and that love should be expressed by helping others, simple as that.**



©2013 Robin A.F. Olson. A Christmas card I came across. What a lovely message.

Last year my non-profit cat rescue, [Kitten Associates](#) [1], helped others the day after the shooting and it continued on for 5 months. We opened our home to anyone who needed us by creating what became an award-winning program called Kitties for Kids. Kids, parents, now-grown former students of Sandy Hook Elementary came to us. They played with our foster kittens. They petted our cat Nora's big belly. The saddest of the children eventually smiled, even if it was a shy, tentative smile. It was the beginning of them finding their way back to the world from the darkness of a broken heart and we were honored to be part of that journey.



In a few days we will be re-opening our home. [Kitties for Kids](#) [2] will begin again and for the next 2 weeks anyone who needs us will find open arms and new furry friends. Inasmuch as we know our community needs us, we need them, too. Hearing children giggle was an unexpected gift that gave us the fuel to continue to help others.



©2013 Robin A.F. Olson. Our town hall turned into the display area for all the cards and banners. There were too many to read each one. I've heard they photographed every single piece, but my mind boggles at the thought.

Although blazing gun control legislations weren't passed in the last year and we learned we may never know why Lanza chose Sandy Hook Elementary to express his rage, the love that has blossomed out of the heartbreak is magical and we hope it will radiate throughout the world.

I hope you will join me in doing an act of kindness on Saturday, December 14, 2013 to mark this sad occasion. I hope you'll consider taking it up a notch and do 28 acts of kindness (or 26 if you prefer), whether it be to volunteer at your local animal shelter or buy them a 28 pounds of cat food, or to shovel your elderly neighbor's walkway or to pay for someone's groceries.



©2013 Maggie Russo. The lovely lady who keeps my hair looking great shared this photo with me. A stranger bought everyone at Salon Michele their morning coffee.

Let's show the world that through heartache we can discover great love.

And may I humbly suggest that we don't stop there. Let's continue to look for ways to help each other EVERY DAY and change the course of history, from one fueled by greed and selfishness to one of compassion and love.

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Comments

Tue, 2013-12-10 14:59 — [jmuwj](#) (not verified)

RE: ANNIVERSARY ^[7]

You have a huge heart to encourage others to include all of those whose lives were cut short in the total, Robin. I could not do so, though I pray to be able to do so. To me, the mother's love of weapons and her teaching her son to emulate her in this is unforgivable; but again, I pray to be able to forgive that, even though to forgive, I must first try to understand something I cannot understand, namely, why anyone loves weapons. I also have to wonder what the perpetrator might have contributed to society with his superior intellect and IT abilities had he followed a path of nonviolence and been raised in a different way. We will never know.

I wish you and all the living beings of your town all the very best, on this solemn anniversary and always. May you all rise every time you fall. And the ideas you suggest, including especially buying cat food, are excellent. Hoping those who are able will do so, and by so doing, help save precious lives.

Tue, 2013-12-10 15:54 — [The Creative Cat](#) (not verified) ^[8]

The Anniversary ^[9]

I'm so glad you can do this again. I'm sure it's traumatic to partly relive those events, but sharing it with your town is the best way to resolve the grief and trauma.

If we all went off and did even one good thing there'd be no room for bad things. We should do this every day.

CICH @ [Google+](#)
Robin @ [Google+](#)

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Links

[1] <http://kittenassociates.org/>

[2] <http://kittenassociates.org/content/honoring-tragedy-kitties-kids-returns>

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