

# The kids are not alright

## Students say #NeverAgain

by Rebecca Lee

Julia Cordover, a senior at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School (MSD), was surprised when the fire alarm rang for the second time in one school day. Earlier that day, students had gone through a fire drill, a common practice at most high schools. During the last period of the day, the alarm went off again. Cordover and her classmates, albeit confused, evacuated through the back of the building with teachers per protocol.

As they were standing behind the school on an athletic field, a student ran up and asked Cordover, "Did you hear that?" At first, Cordover did not understand. But then she heard: pop. pop. pop.

At this point, many students standing on the field could not grasp the events that were unfolding within the school. They did not know that a shooter had entered the building and used smoke grenades to set off the fire alarm so that groups of students would pour into the halls and make themselves easy targets. They did not know that the popping noises were gunshots exploding from an AR-15 semi-automatic assault rifle aimed at kids.

Then, Cordover received a text from her friend: "Oh my God, the shooter shot through our door. There are people who just got shot laying on the floor."

Later that day, Cordover found out the same disturbing string of facts that the rest of the country was learning. She learned that the shooter had dropped his rifle and vest in the building, then had blended in with her and the other students who were evacuating to a nearby Walmart. She also found out that many of her peers had been forced to hide in closets and cower behind desks for several hours. Video taken by students shows the school eventually running out of the school with their hands up, guided by SWAT and local law enforcement officers.

MSD, located in the large suburb

of Parkland in southeastern Florida, has approximately 3,200 students. According to U.S. News & World Report, MSD is ranked #50 among Florida high schools, and students earn test scores that surpass those of the 64 other high schools in Broward County.

"You never imagine it being your high school. It's your home," said Cordover, who is also senior class president at MSD, in an interview with the New Trier News.

The millions of Americans who were not at Douglas watched and read the breaking news in real time. Many New Trier students found out what had happened as they scrolled through Twitter, where MSD students uploaded videos and screenshots of text message exchanges.

Although they agreed that the mass shooting was tragic, many say they were not surprised by the event.

"It's just like, again? I remember feeling after Sandy Hook that something must change. Yet, here we are years later, and nothing has changed," said New Trier senior Ilana Nazari.

But, students who survived the shooting at MSD are working hard to change that.

This is one of the first school shootings in which the survivors are old enough to describe their experiences and articulate the urgent need for change, especially through the use of social media.

It began with several students who appeared on cable news networks. On Feb. 17, three days after the shooting, MSD senior Emma Gonzalez, who now has over 1.1 million followers on Twitter, gave a speech at a rally in Fort Lauderdale that aired on CNN: "We are going to be the kids you read about in textbooks. Not because we're going to be another statistic about mass shooting in America, but because we are going to be the last mass shooting. We are going to change the law."

Shortly afterward, the students announced March for Our Lives—an event they organized from their parents' living rooms. March for Our Lives was originally announced as a



Cordover and classmates met President Trump on Feb. 21 | AP

march on Washington D.C. on Mar. 24. According to the official website, the purpose of March for Our Lives is "to demand that kids' lives and safety become a priority and that we end gun violence and mass shootings in our schools today."

"I'm so glad to see that some of the survivors are saying that now is the time for change and now is the time for action," said Mateo Lariviere, a New Trier junior and cohead of Young Democrats.

Their message has resonated with young people far beyond the borders of Parkland. "I feel so proud of the students who have chosen to use their voice to try and change legislation. They are not afraid to break down the barriers that adults have set for students in terms of what we can and can't say," said junior Pallavi Simhambhatla, cohead of Girl Up Club.

"I have felt so proud. I have felt so proud that young people are finally going to hopefully get something done. I have a lot of faith in this generation," echoed Monique Boyd, faculty sponsor of Young Democrats.

Trevian Republicans did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

Walkouts are being planned for Mar. 14 at high schools from Portland to San Antonio to Philadelphia—to Winnetka.

Senior Eden Hirschfield

designed t-shirts for students to wear on National Walkout Day. She decided to make the tee shirts orange to support the #WearOrange campaign, which began in honor of Hadiya Pendleton, a 15 year-old who was an accidental casualty of a gang shooting in Chicago in Jan. 2013.

"I saw an opportunity—not only to get people in orange for the walkout, but to spread awareness about the cause," said Hirschfield. She has partnered with Amnesty International Club to sell over 1100 shirts in five days, and will be donating the proceeds to Everytown for Gun Safety.

"I hope the students at New Trier will see this as an opportunity for us to use our numbers and our voices to fight for something. We should feel solidarity with the Parkland survivors as fellow high school students and do our part to make a change," said freshman Eva Roytburg, who runs the Instagram @newtrierwalkout2018.

What that change should look like, however, is hotly contested, even among MSD students. Gonzalez, senior David Hogg (who has 428k followers on Twitter), and junior Cameron Kasky (who has 277k followers on Twitter) are among those who have most vocally condemned the National Rifle Association (NRA) and the politicians who take money from the NRA. They have also advocated for a

ban on assault weapons and universal background checks.

In an interview with Vox Media on Feb. 20, Hogg accused Republican politicians of blocking such legislation.

"Children are dying as a result. The blood from all these 17 people who are dead now, and all the thousands of others who are dead as a result of gun violence—it's on their hands and [on] the NRA," said Hogg.

In stark contrast, MSD junior Kyle Kashuv stated to Townhall Media that he is "a very strong Second Amendment supporter," even after hiding in a classroom closet for two hours on Feb. 14. But, although he disagrees with some of his peers' policy proposals, he supports the #NeverAgain movement. Over a week after the shooting, he tweeted, "School gun violence must be a thing of the past. Protecting our future is of utmost importance. We MUST put aside our political party identifications and work together for the common good. MUST: Mental health restrictions, deeper background checks, and effective info sharing."

Kashuv currently has 66.3k Twitter followers, and unlike the aforementioned MSD students, his account was not verified until several weeks after the shooting.

Political differences aside, young people have historically worked as the driving force of movements for change. Civil Rights, hippie counterculture, and most recently, Black Lives Matter, were all fueled by the activism of young people, many of whom disagreed and at times fractured.

"Every student makes a difference. It wouldn't be a movement without all of the students," said Cordover.

Nazari, who is also cohead of Society of Women in Engineering, Entrepreneurship, Technology, and Science (SWEETS), called for greater activism in the voting booths in addition to on the streets.

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## Student activism reaches New Trier for National Walkout day

### Thousands of students expected to walk off campus next Wednesday

by Jasmine Gonzalez

Students are to participate in a national walkout to demand gun legislation reform on Wednesday, Mar. 14, exactly one month after the tragedy in Parkland, Florida.

Students will be joining thousands across the country for 17 minutes to honor the lives of the 17 deaths of the mass shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School on Feb. 14. All walkouts are scheduled to take place at 10 A.M.

Senior Joanna Raimo was one of the individuals who began organizing the walkout at New Trier. Raimo created an event page through the Women's March Group to spread information and gather support from students.

Shortly thereafter, Student Alliance began working with Raimo and other students to organize the day of the protest. Denise Dubravec,

principal of the Winnetka campus, along with other members of the school's administration, have reached out to student organizers as well as Student Alliance to discuss plans for the day. However, the event remains entirely student-led

"All our discussions with students are to assure that we can keep all students safe and maintain the educational environment should a walkout occur. We need to make sure that we have staff prepared to supervise students both inside and outside the buildings," said Dubravec.

Although there are still logistics to be determined, student organizers have released details about the event. Participating students on both campuses will exit the school at 10AM next Wednesday and gather for 17 minutes. Following a moment of silence to honor the victims, student organizers are working to organize speakers and other activities for the remaining time.

"Students are encouraged to bring signs, chant, and take part in the event. We are also encouraging people to wear orange, a color the gun violence prevention movement has adopted to call attention to the

issue," said Raimo.

As of now, students from the Winnetka campus will gather at the track located east of the building while Northfield students will gather in the center courtyard.

Student Alliance President Jacob Imber encourages students to visit the walkout's Instagram page, @newtrierwalkout2018, or reach out to any Student Alliance member for more information

While the school will not be directly sponsoring nor organizing the event in any way, administrators have been working with local law enforcement to set up a security plan as it is expected that many students will be exiting the building for the event.

Students will not be penalized for their participation but the bell schedule will remain the same.

"The school has made sure that students who don't participate in the protest won't feel isolated or victimized. We also encourage students to protest in whatever way they feel most comfortable. If students want to engage in further protests, that is absolutely their prerogative, they just have to accept

the consequences of an unexcused absence," said Student Alliance President Jacob Imber.

Nearby schools have also been working to organize their own events. Evanston Township High School's Student Senate has been working closely with the administration to organize their protest and will have an altered bell schedule to accommodate the event.

Evanston's Student Senate President Emma Stein, a senior, has been contacting various local schools, including New Trier, to organize a "mass call to politicians" in the name of gun control. According to Stein, New Trier organizers have yet to confirm their participation for that event.

The walkout was organized by the Women's March Empower YOUTH group and hundreds of schools across the country (including Puerto Rico), as well as in Mexico, Cuba, Ireland, Switzerland, and Israel which have already registered with the organization to participate.

The Mar. 14 walkout will precede the March for Our Lives demonstrations which are scheduled to take place on Mar. 24 in

Washington D.C. and across the rest of the country.

While March for Our Lives has already garnered the support of many celebrities and received hundreds of thousands of dollars in donations, the national walkout is smaller in scale and more locally focused with the majority of protests entirely student-led. Both events have received the support of the Parkland student activists and survivors.

Another major walkout is scheduled for Apr. 20, the 19th anniversary of the Columbine High School Massacre. Organizers of all the events are encouraging supporters to participate and keep the movement alive.

Raimo emphasized the importance of continuing to show support beyond the 17-minute event.

"This walkout is a good first step, but other actions such as registering to vote and voting, using social media to raise awareness, contacting members of Congress and our state and local representatives, pressuring businesses to cut ties with the NRA, and continuing to keep this on people's minds are just as important."