

An Open Letter to Our Community

Friends, Family and Neighbors, as a group of community leaders concerned about the welfare of our community, we want to address recent events impacting all of us.

Firearm violence has once again brought pain and trauma to our community resulting in multiple fatalities and incidents in a short period of time. To all of those directly affected, you have our sincerest prayers and thoughts as you navigate this journey.

The challenge with this kind of trauma is that it profoundly changes the lives of those involved. It also touches and harms those not directly involved. Firearm violence, like what we observed at our beloved Harvest Homecoming, instills a fear in us that perhaps gathering as a community is a dangerous decision. It seeds uncertainty and anxiety. It leaves us profoundly sad at the unnecessary loss of life and finds us questioning whether we are ever truly safe. It can leave us feeling helpless.

But we aren't helpless and there are things we can do here and now.

First, recognize and acknowledge your response and the reaction of your loved ones. Check in with your body. How are you feeling? Are you feeling tense or anxious, or are you having trouble sleeping? Are you comfortable going out into the community? How are the children in your life? Are they able to limit their social media consumption of information related to gun incidents and information surrounding recent shootings? *Are they talking to you about how they are impacted and how they are feeling?*

Get help if you aren't functioning the way you want to. Are you having a difficult time going into public? Are you getting too much (or not enough) sleep? Are you experiencing significant depression or anxiety, or using substances such as drugs or alcohol as a way to feel better? If so, it's time to make a call about accessing care. You are having a reaction to the collective trauma you/we all have experienced. That's normal, but accessing help now can ensure you don't develop lifelong or life-limiting problems.

There are many local options for accessing care. Call 9-8-8 to access immediate assistance that can ensure you are receiving services based on your specific circumstances. There are several low/no cost service providers in the area waiting to help.

Make sure the firearms in your home are protected. Owning a firearm carries a lot of responsibility. The Indiana State Police provide a comprehensive list of ways to protect

against firearm injury, death, and theft. [ISP](#) advises that when you have a firearm, it is important to use the interventions available to you, including locked safes and gun/trigger locks. Make sure children do not have access to firearms in your home and if there is a concern about mental health issues or substance use with anyone in the home, it may be prudent to have the firearm removed, temporarily or permanently, from your home.

Talk to others about how you are feeling and make a plan to get involved.

We are not helpless, and *together we can make our community safer than ever*. Here are some ways to get involved:

- Talk to your family and friends, and help them access help if needed.
- Talk to your kids about firearms, and make sure they know what to do if they come across one.
- Make sure your firearms are safe and secure.
- Additional resources are available locally. You can call or text 988 for information about accessing care. This is available to teenagers, too!
- Call the LifeSpring Crisis Call Center at 833-SAFE988 for immediate crisis response.
- Participate in the Brandon's House Counseling Center group therapy for teens 13-19 impacted (directly or indirectly) by the Harvest Homecoming event. Call Tuesdays 6-7PM. Contact 812-949-2499 to register.
- Contact Centerstone for outpatient assistance at 877-HOPE123.
- Contact LifeSpring Health Systems for outpatient assistance at 812-280-2080
- Contact Family Ark Behavioral Health Services For Assistance at 812-288-6600
- Reach out to school counselors or primary care providers, including pediatricians, for more information.

The impact of firearms violence is 100% preventable. Let us know how we can help you and your family, and help us build a resilient community.

Arts Alliance of Southern Indiana
Brandon's House
CASA of Floyd County
Centerstone
Childplace
Clark Floyd Systems of Care

The Domino Affect
Family Ark
The Floyd County Library
Leadership Southern Indiana
LifeSpring Health Systems
...and others