

THE FALCON FORUM

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VOLUME 4, No. 6

The Student Newspaper of Saint Augustine's University | www.thefalconforum.com

March 2018

School shootings are felt at SAU

Tragedy stirs emotional reactions, protests and calls for the government to act

This article is based on reporting by Elyscia Vaughn Brown, Lorraine Henderson and Brianna Snipes.

The aftermath of the school shooting in a small town in Florida is being felt on the Saint Augustine's University campus.

On February 14, 2018, 31 students and teachers were shot at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, making this one of the world's deadliest school shootings. Seventeen people were killed and 14 were injured. Nikolas Cruz, a 19-year-old former student at the high school, was identified and arrested shortly after the shootings.

"This feels personal because I'm from Florida," said Lindsay Baker, a senior at SAU. "The most developed countries make laws to prevent this from happening again, yet our country has not. It is ridiculous and is mocking the deaths of the innocents."

Jose Penalver, a freshman, grew up near the area where the shooting took place and even knew some of the kids who were killed. "I've got snapchat from my friends cowering on the floor in fear...it was really scary to see," he

said, visibly upset as he spoke shortly after the tragedy. "I knew I couldn't do anything about it, because I'm hundreds of miles away."

Saint Augustine's honored the victims by lowering the flags on campus to half-mast. Students have also participated in various forms of protest, including going downtown to a rally at the at North Carolina Legislature. One class at SAU, with the permission of their professor, walked outside and stayed there for 17 minutes, representing the 17 deaths. Other faculty members brought discussions of the shootings into the classroom.

A mass demonstration for gun control is planned across the country on March 24.

Since the shooting, debate has raged around the country about what to do to prevent another tragedy like that from happening. Many have urged Congress and state legislatures to put restric-

tions on military-style assault weapons, which were used in Parkland and several other mass shootings in recent years.

There has been some action, for example the Florida Legislature in March passed a bill raising the legal age for buying rifles, imposing a three-day waiting period on all gun sales and allowing the arming of some school employees. But so far there has been no action on banning these types of weapons, which many of the surviving students at the high school have called for.

Some students say mass shootings raise fears that it could happen anywhere - even here. "That could be our school on the news one day," said Jonise Holmes, an Elementary Education major.

Howard Q. Walker Jr., a senior business administration major, wants to see action on guns. "They need to be regulated and there need to be restrictions

on the type of guns that need to be purchased," he said. "No one needs their hands on an assault rifle for no purpose."

Walker added: "This breaks my heart to see high school students lose their lives before they even begin. My heart and prayers go out to all the individuals who are affected by this attack."

Dakari Hightower, a junior communications major, also was deeply affected by the shootings. "School is supposed to be the place where children can be dropped off by their parents and they don't have to worry if they see their kid that night," he said. "Unfortunately, that's not the case anymore."

SAU students say they will help to keep pressure on government to do something about guns.

"This is unacceptable," said Daisha Little, a senior biology major. "Innocent lives are being taking at the hands of people who have no sympathy for human beings...Our children are not protected."

She said more gun control is needed. "It isn't being talked about enough. The laws aren't getting passed and we are skipping over them and saying 'We're going to get back to this later.'"

I've got snapchat from my friends cowering on the floor in fear.'

Jose Penalver, freshman from Florida

Scholar-in-Residence program is launched

By Jazmin Powell

Saint Augustine's University has established a "scholar-in-residence" program with nationally known TV journalist Byron Pitts. Mr. Pitts made his first visit to the school as part of that program, on Monday, March 12.

Mr. Pitts took the time to share personal and professional experiences in a session at the Seby Jones Art Gallery.

It was actually Mr. Pitts' second visit to SAU. He spoke at the Fall Convocation on Sept. 21, 2017.

Mr. Pitts will have an office inside the WAUG suite. The details of the scholar-in-residence program are still being worked out, but Mr. Pitts

told students Monday that he plans to visit SAU four times each year. He also encouraged students to contact him for help and advice, and he gave out his cell phone number and email address.

During his appearance he stressed the importance of having a good attitude, working hard, and having a concrete vision, a plan and a goal.

"I want each of you to be great in your profession," he said. "Not mediocre, not just have a job, but be great."

Mr. Pitts is seen throughout the nation as co-anchor of ABC News' "Nightline." He is also a former chief national correspondent for CBS Evening News and a contributor to 60 Minutes,

the news program seen throughout the U.S.

Mr. Pitts told students of his own experiences where he decided at aged 18 that he wanted to be a correspondent for 60 Minutes. He had students go around the room and state what they wanted to be doing professionally at age 40. Several times he asked students to be more specific or to say "I will be" rather than "I want to" or "I would like."

"I don't go around helping people figure out their dreams - that's on you," Mr. Pitts said. "But I think I'm pretty good at helping people achieve those dreams."

Mr. Pitts wrapped up his time with students with a Q&A session.

It was a busy day for



TV News correspondent Byron Pitts speaks to students on March 12 at Seby Jones. Cianna Fisher

Mr. Pitts. After the session with students, he had lunch with President Everett B. Ward and other administrators, as well as faculty from the Media and Communications Department, which is hosting the scholar-in-

residence program. He also conducted an interview with WAUG radio.

Besides being an Emmy award-winning journalist, Mr. Pitts is also an accomplished author. In 2009, he published a memoir entitled "Step

Out on Nothing: How Faith and Family Helped Me Conquer Life's Challenges." His latest book profiles six young adults, who overcame impossible circumstances.

His next visit will be sometime in April.

Student Spotlight:

He came here to push himself and he's wasting no time

By Sterling Raynor

Justin Bush is only a freshman but he already has blossomed since coming here.

"Back in high school I really wasn't involved in the institution," he said. "I felt that once I graduated from high school I wanted to come to Saint Augustine's University and be nothing but great and step out of my comfort zone."

Bush seems to have done that. He serves as freshmen vice president of the Student Government Association, is a member of Sons of Saint Augustine's, a member of Falcons for Health, the Presidential Advisory Board, and TRIO.

The elementary education major from Holly Springs, NC, said his experience at SAU has been "life-changing."



Justin Bush

He added, "When I came to SAU, I felt that I had low self-esteem and

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Staff Spotlight:

A former Bear is at home in the land of the Falcons

By Sterling Raynor

Courtney Brown graduated from a certain university across town that happens to be Saint Augustine's University's archival. But that doesn't keep her loving her job here as technology manager for the Prezcell R. Robinson Library.

"I always had a great interest working for a HBCU," she said. She started working for the university in February 2013.

"I first got the opportunity to work here

as a contract employee and later and later came a full-time employee at Saint Augustine's University," she explained.

One thing Brown believes she brings to the table is her relative youth - she graduated from that unnamed university in 2008 so she is not much older than Saint Augustine's students.

"I feel like I'm needed here at this institution, as far as being a young adult and being able to relate to students and guide them from any past experience," Brown said. "I feel that I can



Courtney Brown

put myself in their shoes since it was only a few years ago I was that student. Someone from my institution had to invest in me now I can give back and can help

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