

Carla Forsyth – Survivor testimony

2/7/2020

My name is Carla Forsyth and 7 years ago I was a professional working mom of two teens ages 13 & 19 and married to Steve Forsyth. At least that was my reality before Steve was senselessly killed by a young man who stormed into the Clackamas Town Center Mall with a stolen Stag-15 on a Tuesday afternoon in December.

That day my 19 year old daughter and I had just visited my husband at his kiosk at the mall. We went by to support him in his new holiday business venture. As we departed the mall the shooter ran by us and into the mall in a blur. Moments later we heard the loud POP-POP-POP sounds of his Stag-15. Scared for our lives, we ducked down behind the cash register counter and scooted low till a Macy's employee motioned for us to join her in a nearby storage closet. Our hearts raced and our hands shook as we frantically texted & called my husband to see if he was ok. There was no answer or reply to our texts & calls. We were eventually instructed to leave the building and I was so torn about leaving, knowing that we were getting further & further away from Steve – not knowing if he was safe. The protective momma in me also knew that I needed to get my daughter somewhere safe and knew that we should stay together. We asked everyone who ran from the Mall if they had seen a very tall (6' 5") man with receding brown hair. Not a single person or officer had seen him.

Instructing my friend who had my son Alex over after school to keep him from the news, my daughter and I waited at a nearby facility, along with my brother Paul who came to support us, for hours waiting for news. Eventually an officer came in to tell us that Steve had been killed by the shooter, along with Cindy Yuille.

Katie, Paul & I sobbed and hugged each other in disbelief. I knew that I desperately needed to see Alex and wanted him to

hear the tragic news from us. Let me tell you, there is truly nothing more *gut-wrenching* than having to tell your child that his Dad was killed. He screamed and sobbed as I tried to comfort him. Our pastor came to our house to pray with us. Soon our house was full with friends and family trying to comfort us and sharing in our grief. The hours & days that followed were a blur of disbelief. The community surrounded us with love and support and more than 2,500 people came together for the Celebration of Life service we had to honor Steve.

Even with all that support we were forced to embark on our 'year of firsts'...our first Christmas without Steve, our first New Years without Steve and February 13th, Steve's birthday that was also the day Alex was born (no more birthday-buddy celebrations with his dad), Father's Day etc.

We also learned details about Steve's death that we cannot stand for. We learned that the shooter bought ammunition from local stores leading up to the shooting and that he stole the unsecured Stag-15 from his friend the night before. Had that gun been locked and securely stored, Steve would be alive today.

Two days after Steve was shot and killed, 20 children and 6 staff members from Sandy Hook were tragically shot and killed. And the tragedy hasn't stopped, as today 100 Americans are killed daily by guns across our country. Please honor the life of Steve and those 100 killed each day by working to pass the secure storage HB 4005. We can, and we must, make sure no other families face losses like ours because of easy access to unsecured guns.