

Dawson Shooting: Six Years Later Staff Remembers Tragic Event

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September 13th is an important day for the Dawson College community; the day a catastrophic shooting took place in 2006.

“I think about it all the time when September comes around,” said Dianne Hawryluck, who works in the registrar’s office. Six years later, Dawson remembers the turn of events when 18-year old Anastasia Rebecca De Sousa was killed and 19 others were injured.

“The first couple of years they commemorated it. Last year was the fifth year so they built the peace garden,” said Suzanne Bellefleur, a librarian at the school.

According to the Dawson College website, the garden was created “both as a living memorial to the student who lost her life, Anastasia De Sousa, but also as a testament to the courage and determination of all the survivors, the injured, their families and the entire community.”

After the tragic event, many services were provided to aid the community and several fundraisers were held to honour the De Sousa family, as well as other students.

“Everybody wanted to help,” said Mary Diliello, student affairs. “I went to a store on St Denis to get special signing books, leather binding books. I picked up pink tablecloths and flower arrangements for each table.” These tables were set up for the students to give their condolences to the family. The books in which inscriptions were made were later delivered to the De Sousa home.

Other schools made an effort to honour the young woman’s life. “One day one school, everyone wore pink,” Diliello said, “It was her favourite colour.

“The (administration” created an Anastasia De Sousa memorial fund. The school worked on it for a year,” she said. “We had a bracelet campaign. They were blue and two dollars each. We made about \$35, 000,” Diliello said. “Anastasia had learning disabilities. She struggled with her education and had to work very hard all the time. The family decided to give the scholarship to another struggling student. By the end of the semester, we had raised about \$75, 000.”

The days following the shooting were hard on everyone. “It was a little surreal. It didn’t feel like it happened,” Bellefleur said. “I was a little jumpy.” Not much had been cleaned up before staff came back to the school.

“We didn’t come back the next day. Everything was left as it was,” Hawryluck said. “It was important for me to go see. I could see the bloodstains where Kimveer’s body had been dragged out” said Diliello with tears in her eyes. She was present the very next day as she was working with the helpline.

On Monday September 18th 2006, students were invited to an Open House event. “At noon on Monday there was a moment of silence. There were thousands of students. You could hear a pin drop in the building.” Diliello said. “There was a feeling of together. There was no fear of ‘I’m not coming back here to study’, but more ‘This is our school, we can’t let anything like this happen to us’.” she said.

This tragic event has certainly touched Dawson’s staff members. “The family was giving away bamboo plants. I have one in

my bedroom. I think about Anastasia De Sousa every time I look at it," Hawryluck said.

"It was the most emotional experience I've ever had. It was bigger than life," Diliello said.