



Emely Gallo, 11, right, Noshin Tabassum, 11, and Wendy Cornier, 11, of the Joe 15 Team look at some upcoming activities with Debbie Page-Maples following her talk at Stonewall Jackson Middle School in Manassas. Page-Maples' son Joe died from a gunshot wound in February 2008. She now speaks at local schools about gun violence and crime prevention. {Jeff Mankie/News & Messenger}

'A STORY TO TELL'

Shooting victim's mother speaks to children about crime prevention

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Debbie Page-Maples told the Stonewall Middle School students who gathered for a meeting of the Joe 15 Team on Thursday afternoon that she was not speaking to them as their club leader that day.

"I'm here as a mom ... with a story to tell," Page-Maples said.

Page-Maples started the Joe 15 Team, a community service club that's

now active in four area schools, in memory of her son, 20-year-old Joseph Page, who was shot at a party in the Manassas area in February 2008.

Thursday, Page-Maples told her son's story to about 20 members of the Stonewall Middle School club as part of a crime-prevention presentation.

Page-Maples said she hopes the presentation, which she and police officers will give at Joe 15 Team meetings at Stonewall Jackson High School, Brentsville District High School and Manassas Christian Academy later this

month, will help keep the teens who hear it safe.

Page-Maples started by telling the students about Joe.

"He was a happy, carefree young man, just beginning his life as an adult," she said.

On Feb 3, 2008, Super Bowl Sunday, Joe went to a party at a friend's house in the 7500 block of Alleghany Drive.

He didn't know it at the time, but some uninvited guests also attended the party. A fight broke out after a

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dance contest and the uninvited individuals were asked to leave.

They left, but later returned and one of them fired shots into the party house from a nearby yard.

One of the bullets hit Joe, who was flown to Fairfax Inova Hospital, where he died from his injuries four days later.

The shooter, John Matthew Moran, pleaded guilty to second-degree murder and five other felony charges and was sentenced to 35 years in prison.

In her presentation, Page-Maples told the middle school students to be aware of their surroundings to avoid getting into a similar situation.

Joe, who had been in the basement with his friends, didn't know about the uninvited guests, about the dance contest or about the fight, Page-Maples said.

"If he had known about these things, been aware of his surroundings, would he be here today? That's a question that I ask myself every

day," Page-Maples said. "Starting today, I want you to be aware of your surroundings. I want you to know the people who are with you."

The students who heard Page-Maples' presentation said they thought they learned from it.

"I feel bad that Joe died because of something he had nothing to do with," Wendy Cornier, 11, said. "But it helped me to know that I should be careful and be aware."

"You should be very, very cautious about what you're doing because you never know," 13-year-old Rosa Turcios said.

Mona Sparks, the school's International Baccalaureate coordinator, said she thought hearing Page-Maples' presentation would help the students.

"It's going to help them be safer even just walking home from here. I think they'll know to be more aware," Sparks said.

Page-Maples started the Joe 15 Team with a few of her son's friends who wanted to honor his memory. The club aims to help area teens learn to be active in and give back to their community, she said.

Members of the club volunteer at area senior centers and will hold fundraisers for various charities this year.

"This is a very active club where everyone learns about different organizations within our community and also learns the importance of working in the community," Page-Maples said.

The Stonewall Middle School students will visit residents at the nearby Sudley Manor House later this year.

"It's a very good way for them to do community service and it exposes them to a totally different culture than they're used to," Sparks said.

Page-Maples said the idea for the Joe 15 Team came from seeing Joe's friends in the waiting room while he was at the hospital. They could not visit him, but wanted to be there to support him, she said.

"I wanted to direct that energy and passion into something positive," she said.

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