

Three students dead in Ohio high school shooting

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Three students died and two others were hospitalized as a result of a fatal shooting inside a high school cafeteria Monday morning in the suburban community of Chardon, Ohio. Of the two injured students in the hospital, one is in serious condition and the other is in stable condition.

According to witnesses and closed-circuit video surveillance cameras in the school, a lone alleged shooter, identified as 17-year-old TJ Lane, pulled a 22-calibre semi-automatic handgun from his backpack and shot four of his victims, who were seated at the same table. One more victim, a female student, was shot before the gunman dropped the firearm and ran out of the building.

Lane gave himself up to police hours later and several blocks away.

The Lane family made a televised public statement through their lawyer on Monday night, extending condolences to the families of the victims.

A televised detention hearing was held Tuesday in the local juvenile court to determine the status of the youth in custody. The prosecutor was given until the afternoon of March 1 to formally present charges against Lane. Ohio state law mandates that youth over 14 charged with murder with a handgun must be tried as adults and as such potentially face the death penalty.

The tragic incident left Chardon, a small city of 5,000 people 35 miles east of Cleveland, stunned and devastated. The county seat of Geauga County, at the outer edge of the Cleveland metropolitan area, Chardon is a fairly typical middle-American town.

According to the 2010 census, the median household income is \$54,063, about 15 percent above the statewide average as well as above the national average. The city's web site describes itself as "the center of Ohio's maple syrup industry as well as the

center of the State's snowbelt."

An influx of media, both local and national, has deluged the town, but the discussions on national television have shed little or no light on the underlying social tensions which produce such a tragedy.

Despite statements by many public officials that this event is an aberration, the truth is that school shootings have taken place in almost two-thirds of all US states in the last decade alone. (See Wikipedia list.) Chardon Local Schools Superintendent Joseph Bergant was more accurate when he spoke to media on Tuesday. "We're not just any old place, Chardon. This is everyplace. As you've seen in the past, this can happen anywhere."



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