

Parents seek to learn from son's suicide

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ESSEX -- Five months after a teenager killed himself outside Essex High School, the boy's parents plan to hold a forum to try to answer questions they have about his death and to try and make the town safer for children.

Aaron Xue, 15, a freshman honor roll student at Essex High who played No. 1 singles on the varsity boys tennis team and played cello for the Vermont Youth Philharmonia, shot himself April 17 when school was not in session. Since his death, Aaron's parents, Shuwan Xue and Ge Wu of Essex, have talked to Essex police and Aaron's friends, to try and piece together information.

In the hours before his death, Aaron and two boys handled two handguns and ammunition in a bag in the woods near Aaron's suburban neighborhood. The guns and ammo belonged to one of the other two boys. They hung out at the Essex Shoppes and Cinema, and Aaron was picked up by police for trying to steal a bag of gummy bears at the Hannaford market in the shopping plaza.

An Essex police officer brought Aaron home, and Wu asked her son why he stole the candy. Aaron left the house, picked up one of the guns in the woods, called his sister from a phone inside the high school and then shot himself behind the school library, police said.

Wu and Xue scheduled a meeting for adults and children at the Essex High School cafeteria from 7 to 8 p.m. Thursday. The couple said they will ask people who attend to support legislation that could make children safer, such as laws restricting children's access to guns. They also want to encourage schools to promote suicide-prevention

programs. The goal is to prevent this type of tragedy from happening again, they said.

Aaron's parents say they are looking for answers about their son's death. Police, who have withheld their report on Aaron's suicide from his parents, said they have shared all that they can with the parents for investigative reasons.

The parents say they have questions, like why Aaron stole the candy when he had money in his pocket and why the boys had guns in the woods.

Essex Police Capt. Brad LaRose, who investigated the case, said the boys planned to use the guns for "recreational use."

"These guns were hidden in such a way, they were not intended to be found," LaRose said. "There is no information that they were going to be used for anything else."

LaRose said police withheld the report from Aaron's parents because it involves an unwitnessed death and they need to keep some details to themselves, to verify any information regarding the case someone might bring forward in the future.

Police have forwarded their report to the Chittenden County State's Attorney's Office, LaRose said.

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