

Parents promote stricter gun laws

By Matt Ryan

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ESSEX -- The parents of a teenager who killed himself outside Essex High School five months ago shared their son's story Thursday and encouraged Vermonters to promote suicide prevention programs and stricter gun laws.

More than 70 people, including Essex legislators, police and school officials, met in the school's cafeteria to listen to Ge Wu and Shuwan Xue of Essex. The couple's son, 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.

"There is nothing we can do to bring Aaron back," Wu said, "but there are things we can do for the community he once loved."

Wu, Xue and a few speakers pushed for Vermont to adopt child access prevention (CAP) laws, which range from punishing gun owners when children get access to their negligently stored firearms, to prohibiting people from providing guns to children.

Wu and Xue said they believe if their son did not have access to a gun during a time of crisis, he would be alive. They also said they believe Aaron, and his friends, could have benefitted from suicide prevention education.

Aaron's parents, who organized the meeting, provided a slideshow account of the night their son died.

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.

Wu and Xue said they have unanswered questions, like what the boys planned to do with the guns and why they hid them in the woods near Aaron's house.

Essex police have kept their file on Aaron's death from Wu and Xue, and the parents insist the report could reveal new information from that night.

Essex police Capt. Brad LaRose said his department 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.

For more information on Aaron Xue and his parents' cause, visit www.aaronbingxue.org.

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