

Friends, family, students remember Archer Amorosi - Chanhassen Villager (MN) - September 14, 2018

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School has started and **Archer Amorosi** is on everyone's minds.

The 16-year-old would have been a junior at Minnetonka High School, playing on the school's football and lacrosse teams. The tall teen with shoulder-length blond hair would have likely been looking into which college he wanted to attend, said his father, Don Amorosi.

"He was a special kid," Don said.

Archer loved hip-hop, sports and driving around the family's boat. Though he was the youngest of four, Archer was very protective of his family members and would do anything to make sure his siblings were safe, Don recounted.

Archer was shot and killed on July 13 by two Carver County Sheriff's Office deputies in his Chanhassen home after his mother reported to authorities he was suicidal. While the state Bureau of Criminal Apprehension is conducting an investigation into the shooting, Don has been working to help the Minnetonka community heal.

Though his son is no longer on the football team, Don still plans to attend their games.

"Many of them see me as a connection to Archer," he said. "The message is: Talk to your parents, they love you."

If they don't want to talk to their parents, Don hopes they will talk to him, or somebody else.

"These kids have it hard. The pressure in schools like Minnetonka is enormous," Don said.

He believes there's still a stigma regarding talking about mental health among students at Minnetonka High School. Increased pressure to perform at the highest levels academically and athletically has students stressed, he said.

"We knew of one other kid in the school who was having some problems, my son told me about him, but it was kept pretty quiet," Don said.

Archer had extreme anxiety, depression and was diagnosed with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) in high school, according to Don.

"The stigma is still enormous, and Archer would have never wanted to be labeled as having a mental health issue," he said.

Don hopes he can help students and their parents talk to their parents about their problems.

"It affects many, many of us — probably more than less," he said.

Following the shooting, many in the community helped Don through his initial grief.

On July 18, the Minnetonka lacrosse team played a game against Lakeville North at its high school in remembrance of Archer, who wore No. 25.

Don's friends, family and neighbors got him out of the house to talk about what happened.

One person made bumper stickers with an "A" and a halo for Archer's lacrosse teammates to put on the back of their cars.

"(The community has) been fantastic," Don said. "These guys have forced me to engage them; they've forced me to go out and have breakfast and talk."

REMEMBERING

When longtime friend Brooke Dewing learned Archer was fatally shot, she was in shock.

"I really didn't understand how this could happen, especially to him. It was really difficult to process, and it still is really difficult to process," the Minnetonka junior said. "I never thought the last time I saw him would be the last time," Brooke said.

Ever since then, Archer has been on Brooke's mind daily. She remembers Archer as a person she could trust. The two met and dated in middle school and continued to be good friends throughout high school.

"He was always really friendly to everyone he ever met," she said, noting that he had a warm personality and could become friends with just about anyone.

Archer would play basketball with Brooke's brother, attend her sand volleyball tournaments with her family, and went shopping with her mom. One time they didn't have much to do and they decided to jump on a trampoline for hours, Brooke recounted.

"He was always really funny and goofy, he would make my entire family laugh really hard," Brooke said.

Her mother, Karen Dewing, quickly added he was also very witty.

"I think that Archer was a special kid, and I don't think you'd run across kids like him all the time. I just think he was a little bit of an old soul," Karen added.

They have noticed Don and his family's efforts have had a big impact on the community.

"It's such a dark time for them. They've been so giving and gracious with the kids — helping with

the kids. I've been really appreciative of that," Karen said.

"I think it is incredible that they are doing that," Brooke added.

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