

5,000 mourners attend last Columbine funeral

DENVER (AP) — Thousands of weary mourners packed a church last week for the final funeral of the 13 Columbine High School shooting victims: 18-year-old Isaiah Shoels.

His parents, Michael and Vonda, embraced each other and shivered as their son's silver casket was closed before the services began. Mrs. Shoels wept.

"He's smiling down on us. I know he is," said Shoels' friend, Nick Foss, an 18-year-old Columbine senior who was slightly injured in the attack. Foss and his twin, Adam, were among nearly 5,000 people who gathered at Heritage Christian Center for the service.

Shoels was to be buried in

his graduation cap, intended for a ceremony he did not live to celebrate. With his funeral, Columbine High's survivors buried their final fallen classmate, capping a week of mourning the 13 victims of the shooting that tore their school, and their community, apart.

"This is the last piece. Now the healing begins," said the Rev. Larry Russell, the center's executive pastor. "I don't think the healing could begin until today."

Shoels was the only black student slain by Dylan Klebold and Eric Harris in the April 20 massacre and an accomplished athlete - two strikes against him when it came to Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold, his father says.

Some witnesses said the gunmen — who committed suicide at the end of their rampage — targeted Shoels because of his race.

Last Wednesday, funerals were held for Steve Curnow, 14, and fellow Columbine student John Tomlin, 16, the latter funeral 900 miles away in Waterford, Wis.

In an autobiography he compiled for a recent class assignment, young Curnow described "Me in a Nutshell" — a blond kid who loved soccer, knew all the lines from "Star Wars," dreamed of flying F-16s and frequented Angie's restaurant "because they make a great pizza."

"I am not a morning person, and I hate to get up in the morning.... I would either

like to go to college or go into the Air Force or Navy," Curnow wrote in the life story distributed at his funeral, attended by more than 1,000 people, including Gov. Bill Owens. Curnow's 20-year-old sister, Nancy, told of the empty spot his death created in her life.

"Now I don't have anybody to have fights with over who ... fills the ice cube tray or brings in the groceries," she said. "Now I can't tease you about your first girlfriend or even when you start to shave."

The Rev. Billy Epperhart, presiding over his fourth Columbine funeral in a week, acknowledged the personal toll.

"I've never even come

close to seeing this grief in the eyes and lives of the families of these teen-agers who were so full of life," he said.

Epperhart read a statement from Curnow's mother, Sue, who told of how, as a toddler, the boy who would suck on his blanket so hard that he left holes in the fabric.

"Thank you," Mrs. Curnow wrote, "for that special moment two weeks ago when you told me, 'Mom, I'll bet there aren't many guys who talk and discuss things like we do. Anytime you want to discuss anything, I'd like to be there.'"

Tomlin, a shy, religious boy who adored his Chevy truck, was buried in his native Wisconsin. He was

remembered by 450 people and buried in a casket of green and gold — the colors of his beloved Green Bay Packers, who sent flowers.

His girlfriend, Michelle Oetter, 17, said she wasn't angry at Harris and Klebold

"John's gone, and we have to take it and trust that God brings good out of it," she said. "There's nothing that we can accomplish by getting angry at those guys. Anger is what started this."

Before the service began, Tomlin's grandmother, Elizabeth, placed her hands on the coffin and cried silently. "He is a kid that every parent and grandparent wishes they had," she said. "He was always there for you."

School safety technology proposed

WASHINGTON (AP) — Instant drug detectors, hair-sample testing kits, and electronic scanners identifying students by handprint could be put in more of the nation's schools under a \$10 million Senate proposal.

Sens. Jeff Bingaman, D-N.M., and Tim Hutchinson, R-Ark., renewed their call for the money on last week with a demonstration of the latest in school technology.

"None of this is being presented as something that would have prevented the tragedy in Colorado," said Bingaman, referring to the recent fatal shooting of 14 students and a teacher at a high school in a Denver suburb.

"We are saying there are constructive things that can be done with the use of technology."

Bingaman helped demonstrate a drug-testing chemical by sticking his hand in a bag of marijuana. After Bingaman was fingerprinted, a chemical spray turned them red, revealing the presence of the illegal drug. The test costs about \$1 per use.

Other products included hidden security cameras, costing up to \$1,200 apiece, for classrooms and a \$2,200 "hand-geometry" scanner, which would be attached to doors to allow entry only for authorized students, teachers, or even custodial parents.

Some technology could be too expensive for schools,

said Gordon Smith of the Department of Energy's Sandia National Laboratories in Albuquerque, N.M., which demonstrated the products.

One example is a device, now under development and expected to cost as much as \$150,000, that detects traces of bomb-making material.

Sandia, a nuclear facility also working on security equipment for schools, would get \$2 million a year under the Senate proposal to create a school security center.

"Schools have to carefully consider what they purchase and whether it meets their needs," said Sandia's Mary Green, who helped write an upcoming school-security manual for the National Institute for Justice, which

helps with Justice Department research. "There are definitely products out there that leave something to be desired."

Bingaman said an Albuquerque, N.M., high school using some of the Sandia technology has had dramatic declines in violent, property and other crimes since 1997.

The school security plan, dropped from a Senate spending bill last year, should have more support this year, Hutchinson said. "We hope to get it on the Senate agenda," he said.

The Senate's education committee planned to discuss school safety legislation this week, spokesman Joe Karpinski said.

Republicans suggest drug testing in schools

WASHINGTON (AP) — Two House Republicans are seeking federally funded drug testing in schools as a way to reduce youth violence.

Supporters of the proposals, announced last week, said random testing would help arm parents with the facts as they confront their children about drug use.

"The number one fear of parents, grandparents and family members is 'Does my child have access to illegal

drugs?'" Rep. John Peterson, R-Pa., said at a news conference. "The only way to have drug-free schools is to follow the successful program of the military and the workplace."

The Defense Department already has a drug-testing policy, as do many private companies.

Peterson's measure would authorize school districts to conduct random testing unless parents decline to

participate, while a bill by Rep. James Rogan, R-Calif., would require parental consent. The Rogan bill also provides \$500 million for drug counseling.

"Knowing of a child's drug habit is only the first step," Rogan said.

Peter Bensinger, an anti-drug consultant and administrator of the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration under President Ford, said the tests would let parents know to get help for their children.

(See Drug Testing, Page 16)

Two adults shot near D.C. elementary school

WASHINGTON (AP) — Two people were shot last week near an elementary school in the nation's capital, police said. The shootings, in which two adults were wounded, occurred about a block from J.O. Wilson Elementary, the police said. At one point, one of the victims ran inside the school, but no children were harmed.

School officials kept students inside the building briefly after classes, and parents gathered outside as police blocked the streets.

Police slowly let children out of the school as their parents picked them up. One person was shot in the arm and the other in the ankle, police said. No one had been taken into custody.

Mayor Anthony Williams had been scheduled to make an appearance today at an after-school program, but had not yet arrived. Three bomb threats had been called into the city's schools earlier last Thursday, said school district spokeswoman Denise Tann. Earlier last week, a string of bomb threats forced the evacuation of the city's high schools.

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