

# Jammed gun holds toll to 1 dead; student held

By Thomas Holden and Matthew Bowers

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VIRGINIA BEACH — A teenager went on a shooting rampage Friday at Atlantic Shores Christian School, killing one teacher and critically injuring an assistant principal before he was wrestled to a classroom floor, police said.

A bloodbath was avoided when the gun, a commando-style semiautomatic, malfunctioned after the youth burst into a portable class-room filled with students and fired two shots, police said.

As students cowered on the floor, crying out, "Jesus save us!" a teacher tackled the youth.

"Once you see what went on in there, it's a miracle that we didn't have more people killed," said Police Chief Charles R. Wall. No students were wounded.

The shootings began about 10:30 a.m. in the school's courtyard, where four portable classrooms had been set up. The school is at 1861 Kempsville Road.

The dead teacher was identified as Karen H. Farley, 41, of 1600 Hydenwood Crescent in Chesapeake's Forest Hills. Her body was not found until about an hour after the shootings ended and she couldn't be found at an emergency teachers meeting.

Farley's two children were in the school at the time.

The wounded assistant principal was Samuel M. Marino, 37, of Drylie Court in Charlestown. He was shot at least once in the shoulder. He was listed in serious condition at Sentara Norfolk General Hospital.

Because he is a juvenile, police did not release the suspect's name. But a variety of police, relatives and neighbors identified him as Nicholas Elliott, 16, of the 1500 block of Colon Ave. in Norfolk's Campostella neighborhood.

The Rev. Donald E. Taylor, pastor of the Greater Mount Zion Baptist Church in Foundation Park, said he talked with Elliott's mother, Estelle. "I had prayer with her," Taylor said. "You could tell she was quite distraught. She seemed to be doing fairly well under the circumstances."

Elliott was charged with first degree murder, malicious assault, four counts of attempted murder, six counts of using a gun to commit a crime and three counts of discharging a firearm in an occupied building.

Hours after the youth's arrest, police found what appeared to be three Molotov cocktails in his locker.

Paul J. Pokorski Jr., Fire Department battalion chief, said the alleged bombs were made from small glass bottles. They were filled with liquid, but it was not known what kind, he said. Pokorski said it would take a couple of days to analyze the items.

Police also confiscated the gun and an unknown number of spent shell casings and began tracing where the youth got the weapon. They said it looked like an M.A.C 10, a hand-held military-style assault weapon. Some models can function like machine guns. Police said the gun could have been a copy of an M.A.C. 10.

The federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Fire arms, which monitors gun registries nationwide, and police were trying to trace the weapon's origin.

"Apparently we have a young man who snapped," the Rev. George Sweet, pastor of Atlantic Shores Baptist Church, said. "We love that boy. We want to minister to him. We want to help him."

Police were attempting to reconstruct the sequence of events and said they had not resolved questions about who was shot first and the path they said the boy took as he ran from portable to portable firing his gun.

It was not known if Marino was teaching a class when the shooting began.

Police said the boy apparently carried the gun in his knapsack and arrived by bus. It was not known if he attended any classes before the shooting began and why he is alleged to have fired only at teachers in the portable classrooms.

Witnesses said after the boy chased one instructor through the courtyard and shot Marino, he ran toward a classroom of Bible students.

The Bible teacher, Hutch Matson, and a student, James C. Wright, locked the door just as the youth turned and climbed the stairs. Realizing the door was locked, the youth shot out the window and burst in, Wright said. Chaos erupted.

He said the boy aimed and fired two shots and missed, as students cowered on the floor and cried out, "Jesus save us! God save us!"

Wright said the boy aimed at a student. The gun jammed. Matson raced toward the gunman and tackled him, Wright said. The gun fired once more.

Wright described what he saw in the courtyard.

"I just saw Mr. Marino get shot three times," said Wright, 17, an 11th-grader. "I locked the door. And after that he came over to our portable and shot the window through.

"I heard the first shot. I looked out the door and saw Mr. Marino ... keep getting shot . . . He was inside the portable — he wasn't point-blank or anything. . . I was kind of in a daze.

"He just came over to our portable, and Hutch went over there (to the door) and everyone started praying in a corner. That's when the gun froze and didn't fire.