

I was going to read my son's letter (below) aloud at the hearing last night at Newtown HS . I was on the list to give my testimony as a longtime Newtown resident but unfortunately I had to leave before I was called. My son, Robert S. Anders, graduated from NHS in 1998. He was President of his class. He then received a Congressional appointment to the United States Military Academy, West Point, NY., graduating in 2002. He served in Afghanistan and Iraq; received a Bronze Star and the Combat Infantry Badge. He graduated from Georgetown University in 2011 with a Masters in Public Policy. Currently, he is a Presidential Management Fellow serving in the Department of Energy in Washington, DC. He is also serving as a National Guard Liaison on Capitol Hill .

(My husband and I moved to Newtown in 1994. We raised our three children here. The three of them graduated from Newtown HS and went on to successful careers. I grew up in Greenwich. I taught French Language in Greenwich and in Region 15.)

Here is my son's letter that he wrote and sent to everyone he knew after learning of the horrific murders in Sandy Hook :

"Newtown is a marvelous place, a charming little New England town nestled among the rolling hills of western Connecticut. The center of the town boasts a 100-foot-tall flagpole in the middle of Main Street. At its top, the American flag waves high above the churches there, the General Store, the Old Inn, Proud Mary's Tavern, and the Edmond Town Hall which shows \$2 movies on Saturday nights. Just down the road is the town library, the Newtown Bee printing press, and everyone's favorite little ice cream parlor. Among the farms and tucked-away neighborhoods, the sprawling trees are old, stately, and magnificent in autumn. The annual Labor Day Parade brings out the entire town in red white and blue and everyone marches from the Veteran's War Memorial down past the giant flagpole to the Ram Pasture, ending at the Middle School.

The parade is the only thing that ends at a school in Newtown; everything else begins there. The center of the community has forever been Newtown's children. The community pours their hearts and souls into their youngsters. The schools are excellent and the town is replete with athletic fields, playgrounds, and opportunities to explore, learn, and grow. The town thrives only because its children thrive, and they do so because it's a place of strong values, virtue, faith and tolerance. Newtown represents all that is good about America, stretching back to the Revolutionary War when Rochambeau's troops camped there as they marched with General Washington en route to Yorktown in 1781. Since then, it has become the home of Olympic athletes, eagle scouts, state champions (NHS Girls Soccer & U11 Little League in 2012), artists, businessmen, musicians, volunteers and public servants who all give back. It's a place where you're bound to bump into a friend at the grocery store, or where the barber will cheer your name when you walk in, even if it's been 10 years since your last haircut there. It's even the birthplace of Scrabble, where the first game of words with friends was played in 1948.

Newtown is America the way Norman Rockwell painted it. Not everyone is from Newtown, but there's a little part of Newtown in every part of this country. The quilted community that Newtown has stitched so tight and with such great devotion has been desecrated in a way that tears at the very fabric of America."