

WHY WE FEEL IT'S IMPORTANT TO PUBLISH NAMES OF HOMICIDE VICTIMS

WITHOUT A NAME OR A FACE, THE IMPACT TO EFFECT CHANGE AND SHED LIGHT ON AN ONGOING ISSUE - IN THIS CASE, GUN VIOLENCE IN THE GTA - IS COMPROMISED, WRITES LOUIE ROSELLA



LOUIE ROSELLA
Column

It's about trust. Our relationship with our readers is built on transparency, honesty and integrity. As such, we have launched a trust initiative to tell you who we are and how and why we do what we do. This article is part of that project.

We knew there would be some backlash.

We knew there would be anger.

But we also believe we did the right thing.

Earlier this month, Halton Regional Police revealed that the body that was discovered near a Milton intersection was that of a 16-year-old Brampton boy, and that detectives were investigating the grisly discovery as a homicide.

Police later revealed the teen died of a gunshot wound. But, they added, "at the request of the family, police will not be releasing the name of the victim."

While we are extremely mindful of and sympathetic toward the family, who is grieving the worst tragedy imaginable, we also

understood that without the name of the victim in this story, the impact to effect change in our society and shed light on an ongoing issue - in this case, gun violence in the GTA - would be compromised.

The notorious Marco Muzzo case is a prime example of how the issue of drinking and driving was magnified by media reporting on the heart-wrenching agony that Jennifer Neville-Lake and her husband Edward Lake had to endure after losing their three children - Daniel, 9, Harrison, 5, and Milagros, 2, and their 65-year-old grandfather Gary Neville - in the horrifying crash.

As I've said before, any time we, as journalists, can put a face or faces to a story, whether it is a tragedy or one exploring a controversial issue, it paints a more complete picture for

our readers and brings greater attention and public awareness to the situation.

By telling our audience the name of the victim, the school he went to, what he enjoyed and what he brought to this world (in this case, a love and talent for basketball were among his many passions), we were able to further humanize this horrific case, instead of leaving him as a mere statistic.

Some readers were upset with our decision to publish the teen's name, which we learned through legal sources and later on through social media, where several friends, classmates and teachers were grieving the loss.

"It disgusts me that the media went against the wishes of this child's family," one person wrote on Facebook.

Others, however, sup-

ported our decision.

It was Justice Deena Baltman who said in open court, while revoking a publication ban on the name of a three-year-old girl and her mother who killed her, that "without the names of the accused and the victim, it is more difficult to engage the public and encourage informed debate about the issues at play."

Vancouver police officer Brian Montague, in his former role as the force's media officer, said naming a homicide victim has strong public value.

"We believe you can't be murdered anonymously, that the public has a right to know some of the details around a homicide," he told the Toronto Star. "As a police department, you don't want to be seen as trying to hide a homicide in your city."

With social media be-

coming so prevalent in our reporting, we carefully weigh whether publishing certain information truly is in the public's interest. We also have to consider the legal implications, as there are, in certain circumstances, court-imposed restrictions on publishing names.

It's our hope that the more people who know the name Ezekiel Agyeman - the 16-year-old Brampton boy whose body was found in Milton - the more it will aid in the social conversation surrounding effecting change.

The hunt for suspects continues.

Louie Rosella is the online editor for inside-halton.com and theIFP.ca. We welcome your questions and value your comments. Email our trust committee at trust@metroland.com.

LETTER

FOUR DECADES LATER, TERRY'S LEGACY LIVES ON

Forty years ago this summer, Terry Fox ran through Georgetown on his Marathon of Hope.

Only a few photographs of that hot July day have survived. In one, Terry can be seen waving to supporters at the intersection of Highway 7 and Winston Churchill Boulevard. An-

other shows Terry, his visor failing to keep the intense sun off his face, grimacing in pain as he begins the uphill climb toward Brampton.

Terry was running east through Georgetown, a rarity in his cross country run, because he had just completed an arduous

trek through southwestern Ontario during a heat wave. He had added the extra loop in order to maximize his media exposure and fundraising opportunities.

Terry was determined. He was running with a purpose. Adding hundreds of kilometres to an

already Herculean task was worth it to him, as long as it meant more money for the fight against cancer.

As he passed through our town, he was heading back to his original route so that he could again head west, so that he could head home.

Two years later, a film about Fox's Marathon of Hope was shot in George-

town, and in the subsequent 38 years, Georgetown has hosted both community and school-based Terry Fox Runs while raising close to half a million dollars for the Terry Fox Foundation.

This year's Terry Fox Run will of course be different. There will be no in-person event.

Instead, participants are encouraged to visit

terryfox.org. There, they can register for the virtual run, make a donation and pledge to run their own route on September 20.

The 40th annual Terry Fox Run will happen in Georgetown, in a unique way, even amid adversity. That, would make Terry Fox proud.

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