



[Local News](#) | [Sports](#) | [Autos Insider](#) | [Entertainment](#) | [Weblogs](#) | [Forums](#) | [Photos](#)

Search Detroit:

In Metro/State [RSS](#)

Thursday, May 24, 2007

[Print this](#) | [Comment on this](#) | [E-mail this](#)

- [Main Index](#)
- [-- News Talk](#)
- [Wayne](#)
- [Oakland](#)
- [Macomb](#)
- [Livingston](#)
- [Commuting](#)
- [Obituaries](#)
- [-- Death Notices](#)
- [Schools](#)
- [Special Reports](#)
- [Detroit History](#)
- [Michigan's Best](#)
- Essentials**
- [Homepage](#)

1-week archive:
[Fri](#) [Sat](#) [Sun](#) [Mon](#)
[Tue](#) [Wed](#) [Thu](#) [Today](#)

- [Photo Galleries](#)
- [Photo Store](#)
- [Multimedia](#)
- [Weather](#)
- [Horoscope](#)
- [Lottery](#)
- [Crossword](#)
- [Sudoku](#)
- [Contact Us](#)
- [Opinions](#)
- [Editorials](#)
- [Blogs](#)
- [Columnists](#)
- [CyberSurveys](#)
- [Forums](#)

- Autos**
- [Autos Insider](#)
- [Auto Shows](#)
- [Auto Weblog](#)
- [Drive](#)
- [-- New Car Photos](#)
- [-- Car Reviews](#)
- [-- Latest Deals](#)
- [-- Model Reports](#)
- [Joyrides](#)
- [Dream Cruise](#)
- Business**
- [Business](#)
- [Money & Life](#)
- [Careers](#)
- [-- Find a Job](#)
- [Real Estate](#)
- [-- Find a Home](#)

- Metro**
- [Metro/State](#)
- [Wayne](#)
- [Oakland](#)
- [Macomb](#)

Is media helpful during threats?

Parents turn to local outlets for school news; police say buzz glamorizes danger.

Jennifer Chambers / The Detroit News

ROCHESTER HILLS -- News that her sons' school district had been the target of 27 e-mail bomb threats in a single day stopped parent Teresa Siavrakas dead in her tracks.

She wanted to know where her boys were and whether their schools were being searched.

While she and other parents shared what little they knew throughout the day on April 16, Siavrakas got steady information from the local news media.

"I think the word is spread fastest through the media," said Siavrakas, whose sons are in third and sixth grades.

But it's precisely that media attention that has sparked a debate over the way information about school threats is disseminated. On one hand, parents demand immediate, accurate information so they can evaluate the threats and decide how best to protect their children. But that media attention is a point of contention for police and educators who say the intense coverage by TV, radio and newspapers only spawns more threats and provides an international stage for threat makers to bask in the limelight.

"If there is less attention and less celebrity on these things, that takes one of the large motives away," Oakland County Sheriff Michael Bouchard said of the dozens of threat cases that have deluged Metro Detroit in recent weeks, including a lockdown at Northville High School that continues through the end of the week. "It was a tragic mistake for NBC to give the Virginia Tech shooter the celebrity he so craved. If he stopped in the middle of this mayhem to mail a media package, that was a big part of his need. How many people in the world will watch that and say, 'This is what I want to do?'"

Media expert Gary Lichtman of the University of Detroit Mercy believes the media can be helpful in educating the public when lives are at risk or when lessons can be taught.

"When police chiefs get on radio stations with a demographic audience for teens and youth, it does a major service for them to explain why students should not play pranks like this. It takes a 'Mojo in the Morning' kind of crew to talk to (Farmington Hills Police Chief) Bill Dwyer and

Advertisement

Subscribe to **The Detroit News** for 7-days and choose one of these **FREE** gifts:

[Click here for more information](#)

The Detroit News

- [▶ Get free headlines by e-mail](#)
- [▶ Get text alerts on your cell phone](#)
- [▶ Get The Detroit News on your PDA](#)

- [▶ Printer friendly version](#)
- [▶ Comment on this story](#)
- [▶ Send this story to a friend](#)
- [▶ Get Home Delivery](#)

[Livingston](#)
[Commuting](#)
[Obituaries](#)
[-- Death Notices](#)
[Schools](#)
[Detroit History](#)
[Nation/World](#)
[Nation/World](#)
[Politics/Gov](#)
[-- Election](#)
[Health](#)
[Religion](#)
[Technology](#)
[Sports](#)
[Lions/NFL](#)
[Pistons/NBA](#)
[Red Wings/NHL](#)
[Tigers/MLB](#)
[Shock/WNBA](#)
[MSU](#)
[U-M](#)
[More Colleges](#)
[High Schools](#)
[Golf](#)
[Motor Sports](#)
[Outdoors](#)
[More Sports](#)
[Scoreboards](#)
[Entertainment](#)
[Entertainment](#)
[Events](#)
[-- Events Calendar](#)
[Movies/TV/DVD](#)
[-- Movie Finder](#)
[-- TV Listings](#)
[Eats & Drinks](#)
[-- Restaurants](#)
[-- Wine Report](#)
[Books](#)
[CD Reviews](#)
[Casino Guide](#)
[Michigan's Best](#)
[Living](#)
[MichMoms](#)
[Lifestyle](#)
[Homestyle](#)
[Fitness](#)
[Forums](#)
[News Talk](#)
[Faith Talk](#)
[Autos Talk](#)
[Mom Talk](#)
[Schools Talk](#)
[Wings Talk](#)
[Lions Talk](#)
[Pistons Talk](#)
[Tigers Talk](#)
[Big 10 Talk](#)
[High Schools](#)
[Movie Talk](#)
[Tech Talk](#)
[Weblogs](#)
[Blog Index](#)
[Amber Arellano's Blog](#)
[Anime Blog](#)
[Architecture Blog](#)
[Autos Blog](#)
[Big Ten Blog](#)
[Bizarro News](#)
[Bullard's Pundit Blog](#)
[Crafts Blog](#)
[Daniel Howes Blog](#)
[Entertainment Blog](#)
[Fashion & Shopping](#)
[Food Blog](#)
[Golf Blog](#)
[Health Blog](#)
[Henry Payne's Blog](#)

say specifically what will happen to students who make a phone call," Lichtman said.

For years before the 1999 Columbine massacre, the media routinely ignored school threats.

Now, media outlets have little choice but to run them, Lichtman said, because each threat is taken seriously by law enforcement.

"We have learned a lot since Columbine or Virginia Tech. Timing is everything with these things. Communication is very key on this," he said. "We have a lot more resources than we've ever had before. Police, schools and media need to work together."

Metro Detroit school officials agree their priorities are children's safety, working with police and notifying parents. The media comes last, if at all.

"It scares parents when there is a threat. We make sure parents know what happened. Depending on the police investigation, we are selective on what information we put out there," said Estralee Michaelson, executive director of Safe Schools and Student Services for Farmington Public Schools.

"Parents want accurate information. They want to know our protocols are followed. If anyone is caught, they want a public lynching. People are getting tired of having to go through this cycle," said Michaelson, whose district has 12,200 students.

Rochester Schools, which closed four buildings last month after classes were canceled due to e-mail threats, uses an e-mail service to notify parents of such situations. It is considering a telephone system that would send parents a short message on developments such as bomb threats.

"Having the information be out there in the media, it's just part of the process," said Rochester Schools spokeswoman Debbi Hartman. "The media is an important tool in communicating with parents."

Detroit-area journalist Steve Raphael said the love-hate relationship police and schools have with the media should not interfere with an organization's decision to run a story on a bomb threat.


"You have to report these things. The question is how do you know it's going to be a frivolous story until the police get there?" said Raphael, president of the Detroit chapter of the Society of Professional Journalists and a former newspaper reporter.

"You've got to run it -- you've got to take your lumps. If NBC didn't run (the tape on the Virginia Tech shooter) and sat on it, they'd be accused of censoring the story," he said. "The public has a right to know."

You can reach Jennifer Chambers at (248) 647-7402 or jchambers@detnews.com.

More Metro/State Headlines

- ▶ [Ex-UAW officials to be sentenced for extortion](#)
- ▶ [Ortonville gambler charged with evading taxes on \\$3M in winnings](#)
- ▶ [Detroit bus protest ends; patrol deal expected](#)
- ▶ [Snapshots of hope](#)
- ▶ [Iraqi police say they found body wearing U.S. military uniform](#)
- ▶ [Boating accidents up for state in '06](#)
- ▶ [Weekend travelers stay close to home](#)
- ▶ [Budget fix may kill Cobo upgrade](#)
- ▶ [A Detroit success story](#)
- ▶ [Vessel passages at Detroit](#)
- ▶ [Kevorkian in demand -- as a speaker](#)
- ▶ [Police begin crackdown on seat belt enforcement](#)
- ▶ [Group pushes choice on motorcycle helmet use](#)
- ▶ [Driver sought in hit-and-run death of girl, 3](#)
- ▶ [Gardeners flock to Flower Day](#)
- ▶ [1 shot dead in apparent road rage, police say](#)
- ▶ ['Urban agenda' needed to fix cities, study finds](#)
- ▶ [Treasures of Woodward](#)
- ▶ [Hoedown revelers party at Hart Plaza](#)

- [High School Sports](#)
- [Homestyle Blog](#)
- [Laura Berman Blog](#)
- [Lions/NFL Blog](#)
- [Mears Photoblog](#)
- [Moms Blog](#)
- [Motor Sports Blog](#)
- [Music Blog](#)
- [NASCAR/Racing Blog](#)
- [Neal Rubin Blog](#)
- [Nolan Finley Blog](#)
- [Photo Blog](#)
- [Pistons/NBA Blog](#)
- [Politics Blog](#)
- [Scott Burgess: Autos](#)
- [Sports Blog](#)
- [Sports & Celebs](#)
- [Sports Buzz](#)
- [Technology Blog](#)
- [Terry Foster Sports](#)
- [Tigers Blog](#)
- [Tom Long Movies](#)
- [Travel Blog](#)
- [TV Blog](#)
- [Wings/NHL Blog](#)
- RSS**
-  **Feeds**

© Copyright 2007 The Detroit News. All rights reserved.