

School and community grapple with tragedy

School

By ALLISON GLASS News Staff Reporter CENTERBURG — Tragedy has fallen close to home, with the unimaginable deaths of Westerville police officers Eric Joering and Anthony Morelli over the weekend. Joering was a Centerburg resident and left behind a wife and four daughters.

Centerburg Local Schools Superintendent Mike Hebenthal told the *News* that Joering had three daughters attending Centerburg schools, and a daughter who graduated from Centerburg in 2016.

Both officers maintained a good relationship with Centerburg schools, as they both had spoken at many health classes in the district, Hebenthal said.

Social workers and school counselors are on hand this week in the schools, Hebenthal explained, to help students cope with this tragic situation. Teachers have been given a procedure to follow, which includes the signs to look out for if they suspect a student may be struggling with their emotions and needs to talk to a professional.

“It’s just tragic, and the students feel the same sort of loss,” Hebenthal told the *News*. “It will be quieter this week in the schools. Algebra I is maybe not as important today if students need to talk.”

The teachers have been encouraged to help students if they need to talk, but will still refer them to those with professional training to help, the counselors and social workers.

The teachers in the district have also been cautioned to keep the conversations solely based on the facts in this matter. Hebenthal said, “The teachers were told to let the kids come to them to talk and to help with any questions, but tamp down any rumors and keep everything based on fact.”

Hebenthal went on to say, “Youth are trying to find reason in this tragedy, or a reason why this happened. As adults, we know that there isn’t always a reason sometimes. We are trying to help **See SCHOOL on Page 3A**

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students grapple with their emotions and not having an answer for this.”

The Centerburg community is feeling a profound loss and the local schools are no exception to that emotion. “The way this is being experienced and felt in the community, we are feeling is the same way here in the schools” Hebenthal explained.

The administration is focusing on a fundraiser to raise money for the family, Hebenthal said. It is being planned for Friday during the Centerburg boy’s basketball game against Fredericktown. The JV game starts at 4:30 p.m., followed by varsity at 6 p.m. Admission is by donation and all

proceeds will be presented to the families. Fans are encouraged to wear blue.

Centerburg’s grocery store, Hometown Market, will be donating 10 percent of all grocery sales and 10 cents per gallon. On Saturday, the Hometown Market will be donating 10 percent of all grocery sales and 10 cents per gallon of gas sold to the family. Schmidt’s Sausage Food Truck will be at the grocery from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m., and has committed to donating 10 percent of sales as well. Velvet Ice Cream and Barq’s Root Beer have teamed up to provide root beer floats for a donation. Guest baggers for the day will consist of Centerburg Cheerleaders, elected officials and other community members.