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Butler residents search for closure a year after rally shooting



‘IT SHOULD HAVE NEVER HAPPENED’

Matthew Rink USA TODAY NETWORK

BUTLER, Pa. —

When Amy Smith thinks back to July 13, she’s met with conflicting feelings.

“It feels like an eternity ago, but it feels like yesterday at the same time,” Smith said.

It’s been one year since 20-year-old Thomas Crooks, the man identified by the FBI, climbed the roof of American Glass Research and fired eight rounds from 150 yards away at then-presidential candidate Donald Trump. He was just minutes into a campaign speech to more than 15,000 rallygoers at the Butler Farm Show grounds.

Corey Comperatore, a 50-year-old husband, father and volunteer firefighter from Sarver, was killed and three others wounded, including Trump, who miraculously escaped the ensuing chaos with a minor ear injury.

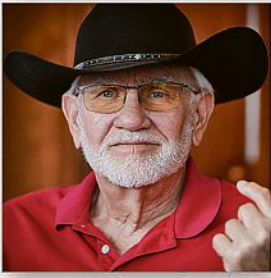
Smith is one of several family members who operate Brenckle’s Farms and Greenhouses, which is across the street from the American Glass Research property. Smith and family members joined hundreds of other spectators on the AGR property to peer through a chain-link fence into the Farm Show grounds where Trump spoke.

It didn’t feel safe.
“There was a vibe,” Smith said.
“I was shocked we were even allowed over there,” added Stephanie Costlow, Smith’s sister. “We were right there. We witnessed it all.”

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TOP: An electronic billboard in Butler County flashes a benefit concert announcement on June 18 in memory of Corey Comperatore, who was killed July 13, 2024, while attending a Donald Trump campaign rally.

PHOTOS BY GREG WOHLFORD/ERIE TIMES-NEWS



“The people around Corey, they saw him get shot. He died on top of his family trying to save them. Two other guys got shot. The bullets were zinging over our heads. There were young kids, young people there who had never seen violence in their life.”

Jim Hulings
Butler County Republican Party chairman



“The conversations have gone on, but the attitude is that this whole thing’s getting whitewashed, that there’s more to it and we don’t know it. Without the transparency, people are going to jump to that conclusion.”

Chester “Chet” Jack
Butler County Republican Party state committee member

“Because it was in my backyard — I grew up literally 10 minutes from where the attempt happened — the response was really about mobilizing resources, providing support, consultations, different ways to debrief, especially for a lot of folks who were not only there, but who responded. They experienced secondhand trauma.”

Shanea Clancy, a lifelong Butler County resident and a forensic trauma-informed registered nurse



U.S. Rep. Mike Kelly, of Pennsylvania’s 16th Congressional District, speaks June 18 about the failed assassination attempt at the nearby Butler Farm Show grounds.

Two arrested for assault, burglary in Bellevue

Roger LaPointe
Fremont News-Messenger | USA TODAY NETWORK

BELLEVUE — After an alleged assault and burglary on July 9 where a man’s throat was cut and his handgun stolen, two were charged with felonies after a multi-agency arrest that included the Sandusky County Special Response Team using their SRT vehicles.

The sheriff’s office report noted that deputies were called to a scene that included a man with a “laceration to his throat and blood on his face and what appeared to be a black eye.”

The man reported that his Taurus Judge handgun had also been stolen, along with his cell phone, cash and possibly prescription medications.

A warrant was issued and arrests made of Dustin Grubb, 40, of Bellevue, and Jocelyn Caudill, 45, of Clyde. Bellevue Police used the FLOCK camera system to find Caudill’s vehicle on Ohio 4, near the Ohio Turnpike.

The Sandusky County SRT Unit was called for assistance and helped with their arrests.

Charges were filed against Grubb for felonious assault and aggravated burglary. Charges for complicity to felonious assault and complicity in aggravated burglary were filed against Caudill.

“Luckily, there was nothing other than showing up to the home with the armored vehicles and the SRT members calling him out, then all four people that were in the residence at the time came out and (were) detained, and the two that had warrants with Sandusky County were arrested,” Bellevue Police Chief Marc Linder said. “It went really well and nobody was injured.”

He thanked other agencies for their assistance.
“(The house) was in the city, but on the Huron County side of the city, and the house is located very close to the city limits. If the guy would have run out of the back of the house and run east very far, he would have been in the county,” Linder said.

The initial call to police was at 3:24 a.m. and authorities arrested them around 11 a.m.

“We had him in custody within about 7 hours. The two guys of mine and the road patrol guys responded,” Sheriff Christopher Hilton said. “They really pushed out some information pretty quickly, were able to develop the suspect and the name of the suspect pretty quickly, and it was a collaborative effort between us and the Bellevue Police Department to identify where the suspect was at. It was what I would call pretty good cop work.”

Hilton praised the work of his team and the Bellevue Police Department, then commented on the use of the SRT.

“This is not overkill. We’re not trying to flex muscles. We’re just trying to do it as safely as we can ... I would rather be able to protect my cops and my suspects so they are not coming out blazing,” Hilton said. “Those armored vehicles really send a message to people that we are not messing around and they are not going to be able to do anything to us. So they gave up peacefully.”

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