17-Day Celebration

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During the 17 days leading up to the anniversary of the Parkland shooting Feb. 14, March for Our Lives Gainesville will be celebrating each individual life that was lost.

 Elizabeth Stout, the president of March for Our Lives Gainesville, created the idea. She was a student at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School and was there when the shooting occurred.

Stout made a list of each life that was lost that day and decided to dedicate a day to honor each victim. From running for Scott Beigel Jan. 30 to wearing pink for Meadow Pollack Feb. 10, she is encouraging all of Gainesville to participate.

 “I’m really glad I made it because I know myself and a good amount of other kids have no idea what they were going to do Feb. 14 and we anxiously anticipate the worst,” she said.

 The celebration has taken social media by storm. Stout is encouraging everyone participating to use the hashtag #17daycelebration.

 “It spread like wildfire,” she said. “Everyone loved the idea and friends from all over the country are sharing it.”

 Stout is not the only one that has chosen to taken leadership in this celebration. Madison Hersch, the vice president for March for Our Lives Gainesville, was also at the school the day of the shooting. She is helping to advertise the 17-day celebration and encourage the community to participate.

 “Personally, this celebration is so important to me and my healing process,” she said. “To see so many others involved too just provides comfort to the tough time we will all face together on Feb. 14,” she said.

 Hersch said that she had been able to commemorate each, and every one of the 17 lives lost that day and thinks that in the midst of the anniversary and protests, it is important to do so.

 She said, “I think people, including myself, feel this dark shadow hovering over the anniversary and I personally think this helps eliminate that grief.”

 The celebration has not only brought honor to each life lost during that horrific day but has brought attention to the matter of gun violence.

 Alyson Moriarty, another student that was at the high school during the tragedy, said that after the shooting, the protests brought everyone’s attention to the subject of gun violence, but it is little things like this that continue to drive the point home.

“I think it will definitely bring people’s attention to the fact that they are not here because of that,” she said. She believes that honoring each life lost will open people’s eyes to the fact that gun violence is the reason each of them unforgettably lost their lives.

Moriarty said that it is little things like this that help bring people together. Just people working out with friends and posting it on social media can brighten someone’s day. Making sure to celebrate each of the 17 individual people that shouldn’t have lost their lives that day.

March for Our Lives Tampa also joined the celebration and promoted on their social media.

Even the parents of a few of those 17 people have got involved. Ryan Petty, father of Alaina Petty, is an American school safety activist. He quoted the tweet for the celebration saying the word “beautiful.” April Schentrup, mother of Carmen Schentrup, also quoted the tweet saying that she will be joining in the celebration and wearing orange and blue for her daughter Feb. 13.

March for Our Lives Gainesville will be holding a Rock Painting on the anniversary of the shooting, Feb. 14 from noon to 3 p.m. at Reitz Student Union on the North Lawn.

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