



Press Release

The Parkland Chamber of Commerce

Marjory Stoneman Douglas Shooting

Parkland, Florida, March 29, 2018: As the leading business organization in the city of Parkland, we would like to share our thoughts and feelings with our community that has been so shaken by the tragedy that occurred at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School just 6 weeks ago. Just as many families were, our board of directors was left paralyzed from the shock that something so horrific could happen in our quaint small town.

As parents, this couldn't have been closer to home. This was our home. That day, many of us stood in debilitating silence, not able to even breathe, as we waited. Those minutes of silence were deafening until we finally heard from our children inside the school. It hit us so deep in our hearts that no words can adequately describe that type of agony. Although many of us hugged our children a little tighter that night, we were left painfully aching for our seventeen neighbors who wouldn't have the same opportunity.

The outpouring messages of support from all over the nation deeply touched us. It uplifted us through our darkest, our most painful days. Words can't express our deepest gratitude to the businesses and the families that selflessly donated or contributed to our community's healing. To express our heartfelt appreciation, our board of directors will be making each one of those businesses an honorary member of our chamber for the remainder of the 2018 calendar year. We will also work to highlight these businesses on our website as well as our Facebook page. We want to encourage our community to support those businesses that have generously given without asking for even a simple mention in return. That is the beauty of true giving and our community is forever grateful.

The Parkland Chamber of Commerce's mission has always been to bring the community together through supporting local small businesses while working with our City Commission, our local PTAs and schools. So it comes as no surprise that our tight-knit business community, much like our proud students, residents and elected officials, have risen from the ashes, united together towards making an effective change.

In the past year, we have seen countless catastrophes that aren't limited to schools. They happen in our airports, our nightclubs, our places of worship and at work. It is affecting us all, in every aspect of our lives. We recognize that there isn't a one-size-fits-all solution. However despite that, the Parkland Chamber of Commerce stands tenaciously behind the movement of our students. We support their efforts for stricter gun control laws and we support their march to stand up for their lives and quite frankly, ours. Safety isn't just a school issue; it's an everybody issue. We desperately need to move forward, both respectfully and peacefully, to prevent yet another life lost. We will not hear yet another parent's heartbreaking cry.

Furthermore, we look forward to the full transparent report and investigation yet to be revealed regarding the deficiencies of our public safety agency (BSO), our school board (BCPS), the FBI and our Department of Family and Child Services. We stand to strongly encourage an open dialog between these organizations to ensure loopholes are closed in order to avoid another potential threat in any one of our communities ever again.

The Parkland Chamber of Commerce is committed to our community and will continue to work towards providing resources to aid the recovery process of all members, students, teachers and residents of Parkland. Please look for our upcoming events, including an important Business Roundtable: *Examining The Economic Impact Of The MSD Shooting*, as well as a public workshop on *How To Be An Effective Change Agent For Your Non-Profit*.

This is *not* a sprint, rather it's a marathon. Our journey will be long, but our community will stay true to the course. Although some wounds can never heal, we will find strength in one another. We continue to look for partners who can lend support, particularly during the summer months while school is out of session for our students. We are looking to foster student and civic events that will keep our healing community engaged and moving forward. We welcome all of you, our extended Parkland family, to join us, and together, we hope we can all say, #Neveragain.