

### Saugus High School Shooting – Santa Clarita, California

On Thursday, November 14, 2019, Nathaniel Tennosuke Berhow, age 16 shot 5 students (***killing 2 and wounding 3***) at Saugus High School in Santa Clarita, California. Berhow died the following day of a self-inflicted gunshot wound.

While this incident is yet another horrific shooting at a school, it's important to take away any act whether by law enforcement, student, teacher, etc., that ultimately saved lives. The actions of Kaitlin Holt, a choir teacher, likely saved several students and most certainly one. Holt followed her instincts and training when students ran into her classroom saying there was an active shooter at the school. One of the students was a girl with two gunshot wounds.

Holt gathered the students in her office, locked the doors and used rolling mirrors, chairs and a grand piano to block the doors to her classroom. She told the students to dim their phone screens and keep them on silent. ***"They kept quiet amongst each other,"*** she said. ***"They were all really supporting each other the best they could."*** All this was part of the active shooter training Holt had practiced only once since coming to the school in January, 2019.

Holt retrieved a gunshot wound kit that was already in the classroom. ***"We had watched a tutorial on how to use that in one of our staff meetings and I did that the best I could,"*** she said. The girl who had been shot didn't realize she had a second gunshot wound. She only found out when Holt was treating her. Holt wrapped the girl's abdominal wound while putting pressure on the shoulder wound.

In times of crisis, we fall back on our training as we react in an effort to make split second decisions. The equipment we have at our disposal is only as good as our ability to use it. In today's environment where businesses, schools, houses or worship, etc., are investing in assets to mitigate the ***"Active Assailant"*** threat, training is essential. We need to understand the institution's policies and procedures, how to use the alarm and communication systems, self-locking doors, locations of emergency exits, and trauma care supplies/equipment. We must train our people how to use them and develop a program to maintain and test our capabilities.

Holt has stated, ***"It was just fight or flight...I didn't have time to think of anything except survival for my students."*** Her leadership and actions were based on personal courage, training and the availability of trauma supplies. She and her students understood the basic tenets of ***"run, hide, fight"*** and sought shelter where they could. It was reported that one student stood at the ready with a fire extinguisher he was prepared to use as a weapon.

While there's never any guarantee we can save a life, having the training and resources available at least gives us a chance.

