

Independence High School 'reeling' after shooting deaths of 2 girls on campus

[Megan Cassidy](#), [Ricardo Cano](#) and [Anne Ryman](#), The Republic | [azcentral.com](#) 10:54 a.m. MST February 16, 2016

Phuong Kieu, the sister of one of the victims, talks about her sister.



(Photo: Tom Tingle, Tom Tingle/The Republic)

Two 15-year-old female students are dead after a double shooting Friday morning at the Independence High School campus in Glendale, and police believe it was a murder-suicide.

The teens were found next to each other. Glendale Police Officer Tracey Breeden said a suicide note and handgun were found nearby.

The two sophomores each suffered a single gunshot wound and were declared dead at the scene, Breeden said. Glendale police later issued a statement saying detectives believe the girls had been in a relationship and that one fatally shot the other before shooting herself.

Police said they would not provide the names of the victims.

One of the girls was May Kieu, according to Phuong Kieu, her sister.



Rob Schumacher/The Republic

[Fullscreen](#)

J.C. Robertson, a junior at the school, said he bumped into May in the cafeteria Friday morning, and she looked “extremely happy,” just as she did every other morning.

“I asked her how her morning was and she said, ‘It’s going good,’” J.C. said.

She said May typically would join a girlfriend each morning after leaving the cafeteria, and they would hang out together.

“They were both amazing people,” J.C. said.

Independence students are devastated by the tragedy, he said.



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“I walked home crying my eyes out,” J.C. said.

Phuong Kieu, a teacher at Independence, confirmed that her sister, May, was one of the two students who were dead.

Kieu said May was an honors student, on the badminton team and vice president of the Key Club.

She also had the role of Marcie in the school production, “You’re a Good Man, Charlie Brown.”

“She’s well-loved by friends,” Phuong Kieu said.

After police allowed the evacuation of the school, parents were bused to campus from a staging area near the Walmart at 75th and Glendale avenues to be reunited with their children.

Some parents expressed frustration at the slow process. Police said parents could authorize their children to leave school on foot, bicycle or with friends, rather than riding on the bus, to expedite evacuation.

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Montini: Stop. Breathe. Mourn.

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Roberts: Not the tragedy we feared, but a tragedy still

Anxiety and worry ran high for parents uncertain of their children's fate.

Some parents were frantically glued to their phones. One mother, her face blotchy with tears, was not. She couldn't reach her daughter, whose phone was off.

About 2,000 students attend the school in the Glendale Union High School District. District officials released a statement Monday afternoon, thanking parents for their patience and saying, "Our hearts and thoughts are with the families affected by this tragedy."

When the school went into lockdown, Kieu said she was locked in with her students in her classroom. They watched the news. When she heard news reports that two girls were shot, both of them sophomores, she became concerned.

"That's when I had a bad feeling that it could be her," she said, her voice breaking.

She called the attendance office and asked them to pull up her sister's schedule so she could contact May's first-period teacher.

She was put on hold for several minutes.

Then, she said, a school official came to her classroom and said, "We have to go upstairs."

Jonathan Parker, president of the Glendale Union Education Association, said educators and community members in the district "will rally to support those who we love."

"They are a tremendous group of educators and administrators and they are going through an unbelievably challenging day," said Parker, who is a history teacher at Glendale Union's Thunderbird High School.

"Everyone in our district is reeling today," he said. "Teachers don't just teach curriculum -- we teach children...This is going to resonate (across other schools) because it hurts."

A crisis mobile team was dispatched to the Walmart parking lot Friday to assist students and parents. Crisis Response Network has also set up a 24-hour crisis line for those impacted by the event, at 800-203-CARES (2273) or <http://www.crisisnetwork.org/>.

Jim Cummings, spokesman for the Glendale Elementary School District, said some of the district's 17 elementary schools went into lockdown Friday morning as a precautionary measure. Glendale Elementary feeds into the Glendale Union High School District.

"Anytime an incident like that happens in our community, it does have a ripple effect," he said.

A candlelight vigil honoring the girls planned for 7 p.m. Saturday at the high school.

Phuong Kieu [created a GoFundMe](#) to raise money for her sister's funeral expenses.

<https://www.gofundme.com/tgrjcxq4>