

Woman killed, 2 men shot; schools put on lockdown

Shooting

Police chase winds through city, ends in suspect's death

Sean Lahman, Meghan Finnerty, Georgie Silvarole and Will Cleveland

Rochester Democrat and Chronicle USA TODAY NETWORK

Police say a gunman was “on a mission” to target family members Wednesday when he shot three people before leading police on a high-speed pursuit that ended with a fatal shootout.

The sprawling incident prompted the Rochester City School District to put all of its schools on lockdown.

Police identified the shooter as 39-year-old Terrell Blake at a news briefing Wednesday evening.

“Today is the kind of day that breaks your heart,” said Rochester Mayor Lovely Warren. “Our officers literally put themselves in the line of fire today to protect their community.” Monroe County Sheriff Todd Baxter praised the work of the deputies who didn’t flinch when they came under fire.

“As the rampage unfolded, you saw officers respond to what they were trained to do,” Baxter said. “We appreciate that bravery, which prevented more carnage in the city of Rochester.”

Police say the violence began when Blake shot two people at a Post Avenue home around 9:40 a.m., killing a 28-year-old woman and critically injuring a 25-year-old man.

Rochester Police Chief Mark Simmons said that Blake was the woman’s former romantic partner, and the other victim was her current partner. Blake and the woman have a child together.

Blake then drove to the city’s east side, according to police, and shot a man in his 20s on Frances Street around 10:20 a.m. That victim, who suffered non-life-threatening injuries, was Blake’s son. He was able to identify his father as the shooter, police said.

The son ran onto the nearby grounds of School 25, where he collapsed. The incident prompted the school to go into a lockdown.

Witnesses from both scenes described a similar vehicle, a white UHaul van from Lake Avenue Moving and Storage with Arizona license plates. Law enforcement patrols spotted the van around 11:15 a.m. near Emerson Street and followed the suspect as he zigzagged back toward the east side.

Multiple law enforcement agencies were involved in the chase.

Monroe County Sheriff’s Chief

See **SHOOTING**, Page **6A**



Students are released to their parents from School 25 on North Goodman Street following a lockout Wednesday brought on by a shooting spree. SHAWN DOWD/ROCHESTER DEMOCRAT AND CHRONICLE



Juliet Blake-Lavan, a relative of suspect Terrell Blake, at the scene on Bay Street in Rochester. SHAWN DOWD/ROCHESTER DEMOCRAT AND CHRONICLE



Blake

Woman killed, 2 men shot; schools put on lockout

Shooting

Continued from Page 1A

Deputy Michael Fowler said that Blake fired at a deputy on foot as he traveled south on North Goodman Street and turned onto Forester Street, just north of Bay Street.

That deputy and other officers returned fire and followed the vehicle to Frances Street, where the suspect crashed into another vehicle and ended up in a driveway.

Simmons said that Blake did not comply with officers' commands and was fatally shot while he was still partly in the vehicle.

According to Simmons, other family members lived in the house where Blake ended up.

"He circled back to that area intending to do more harm to family members at a house on Frances Street," Simmons said.

The shooting took place around the corner from School 25 and the scene of the earlier shooting. Media members assembled nearby witnessed the crossfire up close, some just yards away from the van as gunfire erupted.

"We are aware that there are videos that show the level of danger and the exchange of gunfire that occurred," said Fowler. "Put yourself in the shoes of those officers and deputies. A suspect is allegedly driving through the streets of Rochester shooting at people and they need to intervene, they need to somehow bring this to an end."

No officers were injured, though at least one patrol car was struck by gunfire.

Authorities could not say how many shots were fired or how many officers were involved.

"Multiple officers fired shots," Fowler said "We're working to determine who fired, where they were, and why they fired. This is going to be a long and complex investigation."

School 25 at Bay and Goodman remained in a lockout for most of the day because of the heavy police activity in that area. Rochester Deputy Police Chief LaRon Singletary said that police officers were on hand to ensure a safe dismissal.

Benjamin Miller, 29, arrived to pick up his son, Maurice, 6, who is a firstgrader at School 25. He said he received an automated call from the school district, informing him that the school was on lockout.

"You don't really feel that fear until your child is in it," Miller said. "It's a scary thing. It makes you start to truly think, even when you know they're safe, about what you can do to make them even safer."

"You want to keep them safe physically, as well as emotionally. That's the best thing you can try to do as they grow up."

Miller thanked the teachers and staff members who made sure the children were safe and supported. He said he heard about the lockout from his wife before he heard from the district.

At one point, the district made the decision to place all schools on lockout. Once police informed the district the incident had been contained, the lockout was lifted for most of the schools.

"Unfortunately, several students at area schools are directly impacted by this violence. We have sent counselors to those schools to work directly with those students," the district said on Facebook. "We are also working with colleagues from Monroe County to send appropriate support and resources to all schools in proximity to the shootings."

Suspect's background

Blake was the son of Joy Powell, a prominent Rochester anti-violence activist in the late 1990s and early 2000s who herself wound up in prison. In an interview with a *Democrat and Chronicle* reporter in November 2002, she said she'd given birth to Terrell Blake in 1978, when she was 16 years old.

In December 1998, Blake was accused of using a sword to slice hair from the head of his 18-year-old girlfriend, Rosemary McFadden. McFadden, who later married Blake, said he attacked her during an argument. Blake, then 20, was being sought by police on charges of harassment and endangering the welfare of a child, according to a news report at the time.

Blake made the local news again in June 2002 when he was shot and seriously wounded as he left a convenience store in northeast Rochester. Powell told a reporter then that her son would be paralyzed from the waist down.

During Wednesday's manhunt, police described the suspect as a man who walked with a limp.

Powell, who now is 56 years old, is serving a 38-years-to-life prison term in Bedford Hills Correctional Facility.

She was convicted in 2006 of burglary and assault charges and sentenced to 16 years in prison. Three years later, she was found guilty of second-degree murder in connection with the 1992 slaying of James Rutledge of Rochester and was sentenced to 25 years to life in prison.

While in prison, Powell has written about her work to help police deal more appropriately with people suffering from mental illness. She said her interest in the subject dated to a police incident in Rochester.

That apparently is a reference to an incident in August 2002 that began with a man reportedly acting irrationally outside a Wegmans Food Market then located on Driving Park Avenue. The man was forcibly subdued after a lengthy struggle with city police and then sedated at Rochester General Hospital, where he died. Powell spoke out about officers' handling of the case at the time.

In 2004, Blake, then 25, pleaded guilty to attempted criminal possession of a forged instrument and was sentenced to time served and five years of probation.

Three years later, Blake appeared in a Crimestoppers ad in the *Democrat and Chronicle* that stated he was wanted for violation of probation. Court records indicate he was apprehended and given an additional sentence for that offense.

In 2010, Blake was arrested again and convicted in October of that year of criminal possession of a forged instrument. He was sentenced to three to six years in state prison.

In October 2012, while Blake was in prison, his wife, Rosemary Blake, filed for divorce. The divorce was finalized in May 2014.

Blake was released from Livingston Correctional Facility in Sonyea, Livingston County, in August 2016.

The suspect's aunt, Juliet Blake-Lavan, said that Blake was a tattoo artist.

"He was very creative and he was so smart," she said "but he struggled with mental illness."

Blake-Lavan said that she called police during the incident.

"I begged them. I pleaded with them," she said. "I said 'My nephew has mental illness. I know he's going through a breakdown. Please don't shoot my nephew.'" SLAHMAN@Gannett.com
MEFINNERTY@Gannett.com GSILVAROLE@Gannett.com WCLEVELAND@Gannett.com Includes reporting by staff writers Meaghan McDermott, Steve Orr, Gary Craig, Patti Singer and Tracy Schuhmacher.

“We’re working to determine who fired, where they were, and why they fired. This is going to be a long and complex investigation.”

Monroe County Sheriff’s Chief Deputy Michael Fowler