

# Aurora man to mark Columbine anniversary with original crosses



An unidentified woman looks at 15 crosses posted by Greg Zanis of Aurora on a hill above Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado, following the mass shooting there in 1999. Zanis has had the crosses stored away but will put them up as a memorial in Aurora this weekend. (Eric Gay / AP)

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Aurora cross maker Greg Zanis will take the original crosses he made to honor the victims of the Columbine High School shooting in 1999 out of storage for a memorial this weekend in Aurora.

Zanis, who started his Crosses for Losses ministry after the violent murder of his father-in-law in 1996, said the Columbine crosses will be part of a three-day observance ending Sunday night in Aurora.

A prayer vigil including the crosses will be held at 10:30 a.m. Friday on a 10-acre field at the northwest corner of Indian Trail and Church Road in Aurora.

Friday is the 19th anniversary of the Columbine High School shooting in Littleton, Colorado, where two students opened fire and killed 12 students and a teacher.

Zanis said the Columbine wooden crosses have traveled to some 500 events across the country and have appeared in photographs on the covers of magazines.

“At one point I was overwhelmed and decided to end the touring” with those crosses, he said. “This is the first time I am pulling them out in a decade.”

Student activists from Parkland, Florida, where 17 people were killed by a gunman Feb. 14 at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School, intend to remember the deadly Columbine shooting spree as part of a National School Walkout Friday. Students from some Aurora area schools will be participating in walkouts as well.

Zanis has received invitations from relatives of victims from both Littleton and Parkland to be part of observances there. However, he declined those invitations.

“They want me to come out this year to Colorado and a lot of people have asked me to return to Parkland because they are doing a school walkout there,” he said.

Zanis said he prefers to stay out of the gun reform debate.

“It's just about prayer for me,” he said.



Greg Zanis will put up the crosses he originally made after the Columbine shooting in 1999 for a memorial in Aurora this weekend. (Denise Crosby / The Beacon-News)

Zanis said he's made a duplicate set of the crosses he brought to Parkland to remember the victims there as part of the Aurora memorial this weekend of the Columbine anniversary.

“I am going to mirror the crosses next to one another,” he said.

The tragedies, he said, “are identical” in how they have devastated communities and took the lives of innocent people.

“Nothing has changed in 19 years,” Zanis said. “If anything, it's going on more often. I do agree with the Parkland students that something needs to be done, but I don't know what it is.

“Guns are too available,” he said.

Zanis said he later designed and helped facilitate a permanent Columbine Memorial Garden, with 13 black granite crosses, in Littleton.

He's traveled the country now for years to erect crosses at the scenes of tragic events, made in his workshop in his garage.

Zanis said he has kept the original Columbine crosses in the rafters above his workbench.

“I see the crosses every day,” he said.

***Linda Girardi is a freelance reporter for The Beacon-News.***



With help from Dan Haas, Greg Zanis uses his power saw to prepare crosses last year to honor victims of the mass shooting in Las Vegas. Zanis will put up his original crosses he made after the Columbine shooting in 1999 as part of a memorial in Aurora this weekend. (Denise Crosby / The Beacon-News)