

VT graduate says school's closeness will help healing

SALT LAKE CITY - The April 16 shooting rampage on the campus of Virginia Tech in Blacksburg, Va., was felt by alumni who live far from the university.

Daniel O. Adams, a Virginia Tech alumnus who is director of the composite mechanics laboratory at the University of Utah, was shocked by the events that took place at the school where he met and married his wife, Cate. His wife was a campus minister at the time. She currently teaches theology at Judge Memorial Catholic High School in Salt Lake City.

The couple met at Virginia Tech in 1988 when Adams, who earned his master's degree in science at the school in 1983, was studying for his doctorate.

Even though they left the campus 16 years ago, they have both kept in touch with friends they made there, something they attribute to the school's familylike atmosphere. That sense of closeness among students and faculty, according to Daniel Adams, is what guarantees that the school will move forward after the tragedy.

In 1990, the couple was married in the school's War Memorial Chapel. He earned his doctorate in mechanical engineering in 1991 and was named Virginia Tech's outstanding young alumni in 2000.

Norris Hall, where most of the shootings took place, was Daniel Adam's home away from home while he was at the university.

"I know that building like the back of my hand," he said, noting that his office for two years when he was studying for his doctorate was one floor below the room where the students were jumping out the windows to escape the shooting rampage.

"I could just see it in my mind," he told the Intermountain Catholic, Salt Lake City's diocesan newspaper.

He and his wife agreed that there was probably little anyone could do to prevent the shootings and they both said they were unhappy with press coverage of the event. "We turned on the television hoping to hear more about the victims, but all we heard about was the shooter," Daniel Adams said.

"Like so many other people, we were in such shock, we couldn't turn the television off," his wife added. She was disappointed that there was so little information about the victims and so much on the student gunman, Seung-Hui Cho, who killed 32 people before shooting himself.

Cate Adams was pleased to hear that priests from nearby St. Mary Parish, where she had lived while she was campus minister, went to the Newman Center at Virginia Tech to help out immediately after the shootings.

"The Catholic community is one of the largest" on campus, she said.

Her husband said the healing process has yet to begin for some people.

"Some are trying hard to move on, but are having a difficult time doing so. I know that e-mails and phone calls are welcome," he said.

For his part, he currently has ribbons in the school's colors of orange and maroon pinned to his shirt and he plans to wear them until the end of the semester. He is slated to speak at the University of Utah's commencement exercises May 4 and plans to dedicate his speech to the Virginia Tech community.