

## A story of pain

Chicago Tribune  
January 7, 2005

A heartfelt thank you to staff reporter Jennifer Skalka on "Families united by sports now bound by death of 3 sons."

Truth be told, I was terribly worried that someone would "get ahold of the story" and sensationalize, trivialize or carelessly expose the agony in this community. Skalka was able to convey the emotional devastation that has enveloped three families and reverberated through all the families who knew and loved these kids.

While we struggle to make peace with tragedy, I am grateful that she wove compassion and eloquence in the telling of our pain.

Jill Sevelow  
Homewood

## One boy's life touches so many others

Chicago Tribune  
January 7, 2005

In the holiday classic "It's A Wonderful Life," a depressed George Bailey is being counseled by his guardian angel, Clarence, who struggles to convince George that his life is indeed worth living. When George is given the opportunity to see how the lives of his family, friends and community members would have changed had he never been born, he begins to see the wisdom of Clarence's words: "Strange, isn't it? Each man's life touches so many other lives, and when he isn't around he leaves an awful hole, doesn't he? . . . You see, George, you really had a wonderful life. Don't you see what a mistake it would be to throw it away?"

Many of us in the Homewood-Flossmoor community were unable to enjoy that great film this year, since we lost two young men to suicide in recent months. Your staff reporter, Jennifer Skalka, did a commendable job in communicating the community-wide devastation that these deaths,

combined with the earlier accidental drowning of their swimming teammate, has wrought on our sleepy suburbs ("Families united by sports now bound by deaths of 3 sons," Page 1, Dec. 30).

The deaths of Scott Sims and Mike Strein were like a body blow to our towns, but the recent suicide of Bret Rademaker, who had eulogized both of his pals, has unleashed a sort of psychological tsunami that washed over all of us, leaving us riven, bereft and searching for solace. Every parent in our community feels freshly vulnerable, because these boys had everything to live for.

One boy's life touches so many others. The three lives lost in the Homewood-Flossmoor community have hit us so hard that one can only hope that we can find a vehicle to help our children know that we don't want to ever experience the awful hole that these parents have to face on a daily basis.

Scholarships have been established and some are talking about a charitable foundation that will help troubled teens through difficult times.

In the meantime, these two communities are doing a lot of hugging and crying.

As Bret's mom courageously said to the Tribune, "We want all the kids to know that all their parents feel the same way about them that we felt about our B" (Bret).

Amen.

Terry Lavin  
Flossmoor