



‘We’re losing way too many’

Crime scene tape remains on a fence on Denver Street on Tuesday after three people were shot, one fatally, on Hazelwood Terrace near Denver on Monday. TINA MACINTYRE-YEE/DEMOCRAT AND CHRONICLE

Despair persists over lives forever affected by Rochester gun violence

Kayla Canne Rochester Democrat and Chronicle | USA TODAY NETWORK

Denver Street was quiet by the time Wanda Ridgeway arrived. ● The gunfire that struck three young people earlier Monday evening, Aug. 12, had stopped. One teen was dead. The crowd of neighbors who rushed to their aid had mostly retreated back inside their homes. A few stood on their front porch, shaking their heads solemnly as they met Ridgeway’s gaze. ● She understood that feeling of defeat. **See LOSING, Page 4A**

If you have information

Anyone with information about a shooting is asked to call 911 or the Rochester Police Department’s Major Crimes Unit at (585) 428-7157 or email MajorCrimes@cityofrochester.gov. You can reach Rise Up Rochester at (585) 454-3060 or at RiseUpRochester@yahoo.com.



A small collection of candles was left near the corner of Hazelwood Terrace and Denver Street after a 19-year-old woman was shot and killed there. KAYLA CANNE/DEMOCRAT AND CHRONICLE

Losing

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Gun violence in Rochester is down so far this year. Fewer people have been shot compared to this time last year, though homicides remain steady, according to data from the Rochester Police Department.

"It doesn't seem like it," Ridgeway said, even as she knows the data better than most. She responds to nearly every homicide as director of Rise Up Rochester, a nonprofit that provides wrap-around services for shooting victims and their families.

Gun violence at Maplewood Park still resonates

The city is still reeling from a mass shooting at Maplewood Park last month that killed two, injured five and sent dozens scrambling for safety. Police have not yet arrested anyone. In June, six people were shot during a late night gathering at Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Park.

Monday's triple shooting claimed the life of 19-year-old Rukia Issack and left a 16-year-old boy in critical condition. The third victim, a 15-year-old boy, was hospitalized but in stable condition, police said.

They were shot next to a vibrant community garden, its first sunflowers in bloom.

By Tuesday afternoon, there were few signs of the tragedy that took place there not 24 hours before. Crime scene tape dangled from the edge of a nearby garbage bin. A small collection of candles sat alongside small flowers lodged in fresh mulch.

"We're losing way too many," Ridgeway said. "Way too many."



Wanda Ridgeway, executive director of Rise Up Rochester, posts a flyer in the entry of a corner store on Chili and Post Aves. during a community outreach walk in 2023, letting people know about help they offer people affected by violence.

TINA MACINTYRE-YEE/ROCHESTER DEMOCRAT AND CHRONICLE

Community mistrust in police persists

At a press conference last week, Mayor Malik Evans said the city's success in reducing shootings offers little solace to current victims of gun violence.

"We're still not satisfied, because if you have people being shot in a park, or people sitting on their porch being shot at, that is not something that should take place in a civilized society," he said.

"How can I be satisfied when I was just on the phone with Tyasia Manning's father?" Evans added, referencing one of the two women who were killed in the Maplewood Park shooting.

Efforts to interrupt gun violence present a puzzling paradox: Police often need the community's help to solve violent crime, but Ridgeway acknowledged that a legacy of police brutality toward

people of color leave many hesitant to speak up. And every new story of a Black person wronged by police — whether in Rochester or in other cities near and far — furthers that divide.

"The community don't really know what to do," she said. "They don't know who to trust. Every time we think we're in a healing process (with the police), something happens."

Also, sometimes the fear of retribution from shooters keeps people from speaking to police.

The silence is in some ways contributing to Rochester's gun violence epidemic. Ridgeway said it sometimes feels like the community has given up on itself: "They go into their house and shut their doors — until death comes knocking at their door. Then it's like, nobody's doing anything. No, we're trying."

"We got to start trusting somewhere,"

"The community don't really know what to do. They don't know who to trust. Every time we think we're in a healing process (with the police), something happens."

Wanda Ridgeway
Director of Rise Up Rochester

she added. "I tell people all the time — maybe you don't want to talk to the police, but I will. It's our duty. As civilians, it's our duty. We're supposed to tell what happens."

Former student gunned down in Rochester attack

Monday's shooting hit close to home. Issack was Ridgeway's former student in the city school district. She remembered the girl's eyes, always seemingly searching for love and connection. Issack would often visit Ridgeway's classroom for a quiet space to take a break.

On Tuesday, Ridgeway was thinking of the next generation. The Rochester Rams Pop Warner football team was practicing around the corner at School No. 33 off Parkside Avenue when the shots rang out on Denver Street.

"How do we make sure they feel safe?" Ridgeway wondered.

Kayla Canne covers community safety, with a focus on police accountability, government surveillance and how individuals are impacted by violence. Follow her on Twitter @kaylacanne and @bykaylacanne on Instagram. Get in touch at kcanne@gannett.com.