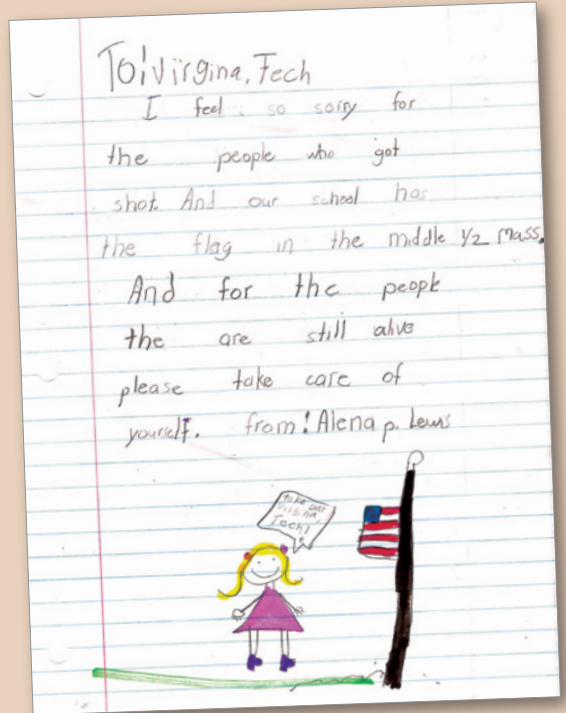


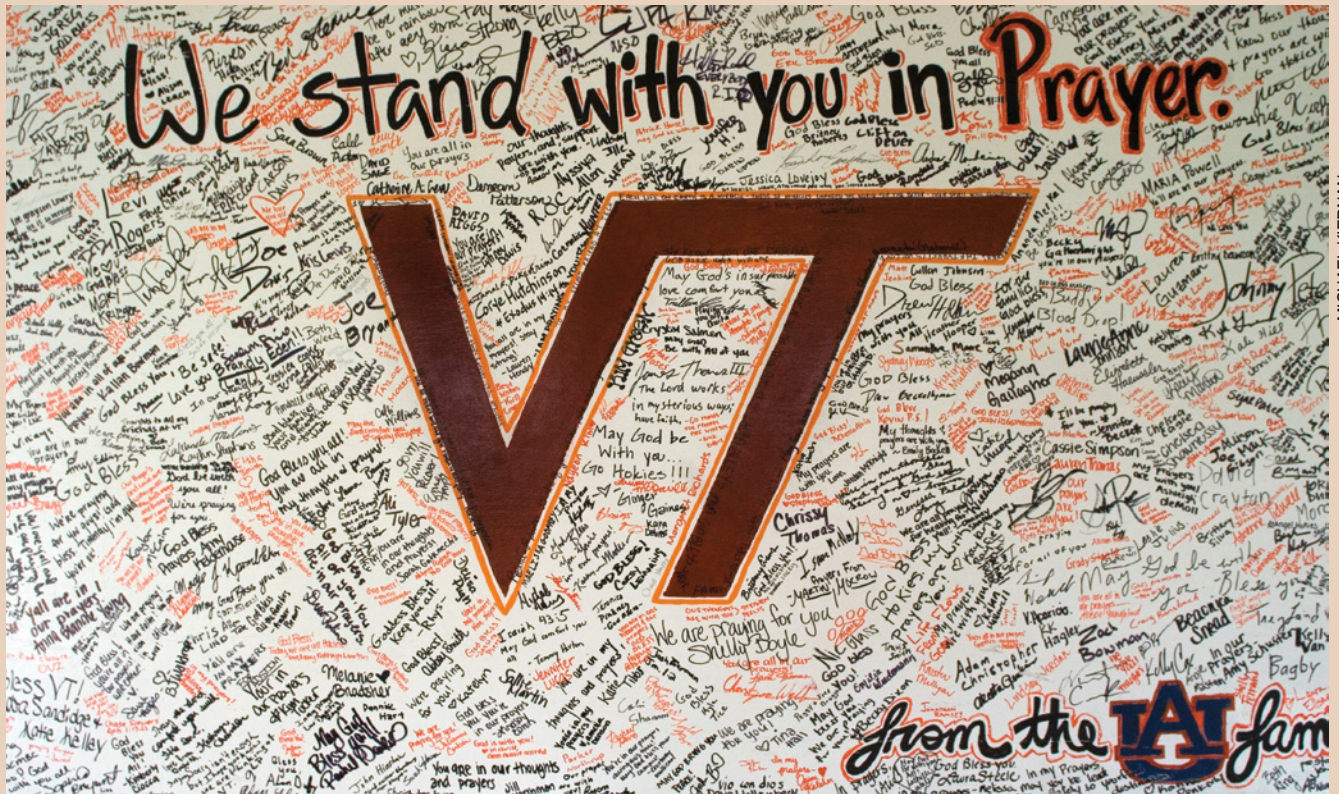
Today, the world wears orange and maroon. It is at the same time overwhelming, comforting, and disorienting. Everyone asks if we knew any of the victims. We knew them all. Because not long ago, they were behind us at the grocery store or next to us at church, or simply breathing the same glorious mountain air that we were. They loved this place as much as we do but were robbed of the chance to enjoy it any longer.

We know the university by heart, but now our hearts are broken. Yet some things haven't changed. I look at Virginia Tech students and see in them the person I someday hope to be. Brotherhood, Honor, Leadership, Loyalty, Service, Sacrifice, and Duty have never been more evident. We will not let one person destroy what always has been so good and true—we are a community, not a crime scene. On April 16, the heroism of our police force, the bravery of our neighbors, and the lives of 32 beautiful people showed us, once again, that there is still no better place to call home.

— Ann Cassell, lifelong Blacksburg resident



From second-grader Alena Lewis of Titusville, Fla. After she asked, “Mommy, why is the flag flying lower today?” and was told that something had happened at Virginia Tech, Alena wrote this letter.



MICHAEL KIERNAN