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INDUSTRY NEWS

Louisville mourns the loss of five slain Old National employees

By [Jordan Stutts](#), [Kevin Wack](#) | April 12, 2023, 9:51 p.m. EDT | 7 Min Read



Old National Bank said that it was closing its banking centers early on Wednesday so that its employees could participate in a vigil for colleagues killed in a mass shooting two days before. *Adobe Stock*

Whitney Austin stood before a crowd of mourners on Wednesday in Louisville, Kentucky, and lamented that it wasn't the first time she'd been affected by a mass shooting.

In fact, it wasn't even the first time she'd been affected by a mass shooting at a bank.

"Monday morning was heartbreakingly familiar to me," Austin said. "I've done this before."

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Back in 2018, [Austin was shot 12 times](#) by a gunman who killed three people and injured two others at Fifth Third Bancorp's headquarters in Cincinnati. At the time, Austin was a Fifth Third product manager who lived in Louisville, which is just 100 miles southwest of Cincinnati.

After surviving the shooting, Austin co-founded Whitney/Strong, an organization dedicated to finding common ground to end gun violence.

Then on Monday, Austin's hometown was the site of another mass shooting at a bank. An Old National Bank employee opened fire in a downtown Louisville branch, killing five colleagues and injuring at least nine other people.

In remarks Wednesday at a community vigil, Austin expressed hope that the tragedy will yield positive change, even as the toll from mass shootings in the United States continues to rise.

Austin noted that she advocated for the passage of the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act, which aims to reduce gun violence and was signed into law by President Biden last June.

"We made history on that day, and we will do it again," Austin said during the vigil at the Muhammad Ali Center in Louisville. "And we will all look back on this moment, and we will know that what happened on April 10, 2023, mattered."

Before the Old National branch in downtown Louisville opened on Monday morning, gunfire interrupted a staff meeting. In addition to the five bank employees who were

killed, three individuals were in critical condition as of Tuesday, including a police officer who responded to the scene.

Local authorities identified the shooter as Connor Sturgeon, who was described in media reports as a disgruntled Old National employee. He was killed when Louisville Metro Police Department arrived at the bank and exchanged gunfire.

The five Old National employees who were killed are being remembered this week as friends, family and beloved members of the Louisville community.

Joshua Barrick, 40, joined Old National last August as a senior vice president of commercial real estate banking. The husband and father of two was "full of joy and life" and he made others "feel better just with his presence," Jason Brewer, who described himself as a close friend, wrote in a social media post.

Barrick loved his family, faith, community and the youth basketball teams he coached as a congregation member at Holy Trinity Church, Father Shayne Duvall said during a separate vigil on Monday night.

"He just loved life," Duvall said during the vigil. "Everyone is just kind of in a fog like, 'Did this really just happen today?'"

Deana Eckert, 57, was reportedly a mother of two and an executive administrative officer at Old National who had previously worked at Alliance Bank and BB&T.

Eckert was kind, gentle and the "toughest woman I've ever had the privilege to know," Molly Tonnies, who identified herself as Eckert's niece, posted on Facebook.

Thomas 'Tommy' Elliott, 63, was a longtime Kentucky banking executive and a senior vice president at Old National. Elliott was active in the community, supporting initiatives such as the Louisville Islamic Center of Compassion and helping to launch the political careers of many local politicians.

Juliana Farmer, 45, was a commercial banking agent who had just recently joined Old National in Louisville, according to a Facebook post by Michael Williams, who identified himself as her uncle.

"She had a great opportunity. Now we're mourning you losing your life at the job," Williams wrote. "I'm just hurt."

James 'Jim' Tutt, 64, was a longtime commercial banker in Lexington before he joined Old National as a market executive. While attending the University of Kentucky, he played bass drum in the marching band, according to [media reports](#). He was reportedly known as a family man who got the nickname "King Tutt" from former colleagues.

The speakers at Wednesday's community vigil included Old National CEO Jim Ryan. The Evansville, Indiana, bank had announced earlier in the day that its banking centers would close at 3:30 p.m. Eastern so that employees could participate in the vigil.

"Make no mistake, these were extraordinary people," Ryan said of the victims. "They were loving, generous and gifted. They poured themselves out everyday in service of others."

Ryan expressed gratitude for the "outpouring" of support from the Louisville Metro Police Department, doctors, paramedics and other first responders who protected, saved and helped Old National employees.

"The greatest way we can continue to honor everyone who has been impacted by this tragedy is to do our best to follow their example," Ryan said. "We need to love one another, we need to care for one another. And we need to support one another."

Kentucky Gov. Andy Beshear also spoke at the vigil, telling the crowd that one way to honor the "irreplaceable Kentuckians" lost in Monday's tragedy is to "be better for them."

"I'm not angry. I'm empty," said Beshear, who was close friends with Elliott. "Acts like this tear at the very fabric of humanity and who we are and who we want to be."

[INDUSTRY NEWS](#)

Old National Bank employee kills four in shooting at Louisville branch

April 10, 2023 4:02 PM



Around 400 homicides occur at [workplaces](#) every year, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. And more than 20,000 workers experience workplace violence trauma each year, according to data from the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health.

Sturgeon [reportedly](#) worked three consecutive summer internships at Old National while completing a master's degree in finance at the University of Alabama. In 2021, he joined the bank full time and identified himself on LinkedIn as a syndications associate and portfolio banker.

[One recent post to an Instagram account](#) that apparently belonged to Sturgeon reportedly said: "They won't listen to words or protests. Let's see if they hear this."

The Louisville shooting was the 15th mass killing in the United States this year, with nearly 80 people killed altogether, according to a [database](#) maintained by Northeastern University, the Associated Press and USA Today.

In a society suffering an increasing amount of mass shooting incidents, employee risk management should be a growing concern for employers, said Tom Miller, CEO of ClearForce, a firm that provides data and security services to companies.

"We're seeing a never-ending trend of people these days that are under more pressure, stress and operating with a short fuse," Miller said in an interview. "If it happens outside the workplace, eventually it will make itself into the workplace."

Miller urged companies to be "proactive" about employee engagement and communication, and said that digital reporting tools can help company leaders "pre-define" concerning behavior.

"The problem that employers have is that employees that need help tend not to raise their hand," he said. "Companies need to keep layering in more capabilities that's designed to create safe environments."

While corporate mental health resources have gotten greater priority in recent years, Miller said, the remote work that began during the pandemic has created challenges for employers as they seek to keep a "temperature check" on the wellness of their workers.

A [report](#) last year from the Society for Human Resource Management found that nearly half of U.S. employers reported that they were unprepared to prevent and respond to workplace violence incidents.

Judy Arnetz, a family medicine professor at Michigan State University who's studied workplace violence, said that Monday's events differ from other, seemingly random mass shootings.

At the Old National branch in Louisville, the shooter targeted the victims, Arnetz noted.

"When someone goes into a supermarket or a mall, there doesn't seem to be any rhyme or reason. They're just shooting," she said. "It's considered workplace violence when the perpetrator has a connection. There's either a conflict or a potential source of disgruntlement."

While employers still need to increase efforts to monitor the well-being of their employees, incidents like the Louisville shooting will always be difficult to predict because the vast majority of unhappy employees will not engage in mass violence, Arnetz said.

"This was such an unexpected act that I don't know how preparing would have been possible," she said.

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