

JAMIE DENTON WITH HER SON ROBERT LEACHMAN

“It’s a lifetime thing. Every day’s a struggle. Every day’s a challenge.”

Jamie Denton chokes up talking about the impact her son’s violent death has had on his three younger brothers and how she’s struggled.



Robert Leachman, 20, died on Aug. 2, 2017, from multiple gunshot wounds at Parkway Place Apartments two weeks before he was to start nursing school. The family believes the shooting stemmed from an earlier argument on a basketball court.

Jamie’s three other sons, who were 9, 11 and 16 at the time, were close to their brother and their behaviors all changed in different ways after his death.

“It took something out of them,” she said.

Before the death of their brother, they were good students with good grades, she said. Afterward, her 16-year-old “shut himself off” and didn’t go out, was scared to take TARC and had to have a ride with someone to go anywhere. He no longer wanted to attend Ballard and instead now attends Jefferson County High School.

The 11-year-old became out of control in school, not listening, but now is doing better, she said. The 9-year-old withdrew but also began writing rap songs about his brother and at the end of the school year he chose the topic “Stop the Violence” for a project.

She and her children have all had counseling and their public schools have been helpful but her children “are hurt and stressed and looking at me, they see more stress because they are worrying about me,” she said.

1,616

Number of times in the first six months of 2019 that an electronic gunfire detection system alerted police to shots fired in an area totaling six square miles, an average of nine times a day, 269 times a month.

The system called Shotspotter operates in parts of the 1st, 2nd and 4th police districts in West Louisville, and Smoketown and Old Louisville just east and south of downtown.

They moved after the shooting, she said, and now feel safe in their neighborhood but not safe enough to visit a nearby park. Her older son warned her to stop walking in the park because of a gang that frequents there. "So, I don't go to that park," she said.

A few weeks after her son was killed, when she was still in her old home on Madison Street north of Broadway, during a neighborhood cookout on Labor Day weekend, shooters fired bullets at homes including hers and shot up cars. "We were terrified," she said.

"I switched up my house and I switched up my car. I had to, to survive."

In the aftermath of her son's death, her health declined, and she suffered a heart attack at age 39 last spring.

"Kids will keep you strong because they know what you're going through. They want to see you the same."

Murders from gun fire are a "totally different" level of dying than by other means. "It's the cruelest thing, that a person can die of that."