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T.J. Lane in custody after prison escape

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Thomas "T.J." Lane III is in custody after the Chardon High School shooter escaped from an Allen County prison with two other inmates before 8 p.m. Sept. 11. One was captured shortly after the escape. At 1:36 a.m. Sept. 12, The Associated Press confirmed with the Ohio Highway Patrol that Lane was caught. At 2:02 a.m. Sept. 12, the [Lima Police Department confirmed on Twitter](#) that Lane was in custody and had been returned to the prison. During a 2:30 a.m. press conference outside the Allen Oakwood Correctional Institution, Warden Kevin Jones said Lane was apprehended without incident about 1:20 a.m. He was about 100 yards from prison.

At another press conference at about 5:15 a.m. Jones confirmed that the third escaped inmate, Clifford Opperud, was taken into custody without incident by the Ohio State Highway Patrol at 4:22 a.m.

According to the Associated Press, Jones said that Lane did not say anything after he was captured. Jones was also questioned as to why Lane was being kept at the minimum- and -medium-security prison, and not somewhere more secure.

"That will be something we'll have to sit down and look at," he said.

Jones would not say how the inmates escaped nor if they planned the escape together.

Lt. John Hiscox with the Geauga County Sheriff's Office said that Lane was captured near a barn on a farm. Chardon School officials, as well as members of the Chardon Police Department and the Geauga County Sheriff's Office, held a news conference at 2 a.m. about the incident.

Chardon Police Chief Scott Niehus said local, state and federal officials offered support to the city "to ensure our community remained safe throughout this event."

"The Chardon Police Department will continue to demonstrate a visible presence in our schools to support the students, teacher and staff as they prepare to return to school on Monday," Niehus said.

Gauga County Sheriff's Office Chief Deputy Scott Hildenbrand said that the department was able to monitor by radio the status of the search.

"We are very happy with the outcome: the apprehension of T.J. Lane," Hildenbrand said.

Once informed of Lane's escape, Hildenbrand said the office immediately contacted the victims' families, school officials and other local police agencies.

Hiscox said that "key people" involved in the shooting incident and subsequent trial had extra patrol during the ordeal, but he would not specify who those people were.

While classes throughout the district were canceled for Sept. 12, Chardon High School Principal Andrew Fetchik said the high school and middle school would be open for counseling from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

"We encourage all students and staff, or anyone who wants to reach out and talk," he said. "As we work through this together, I know things will get better as they have before and we will continue to be Chardon strong."

Hiscox added that he is glad that counseling will be available for anyone who needs it.

"You'd be lying to say that it didn't bring back a lot of memories," he said. "Just as concerned as we were coming, once we heard that he was taken into custody it was like an early Christmas gift."

Hiscox also said that when he first heard about Lane's escape at about 8 p.m., he had the same feeling as being on a roller coaster.

"Your stomach falls to your ankles," he said. "It's just not something you look forward to."

Chardon Schools Superintendent Michael Hanlon kept the focus of his remarks on the Chardon community and not on Lane.

"First and foremost, our thoughts and prayers go out today to the families of Demetrius, Russell and Danny, and all others affected by the tragedy," he said.

Hanlon also said that the several-hour incident was difficult on the community.

"While the individual is now back in custody, there has certainly been an undeniable, profound and deep impact on our entire community," he said. "Having now served as superintendent of schools for one year, it has quickly become apparent to me that Chardon remains a strong and resilient community that has rallied around each other before, and I am confident that we will continue to do so now and into the future."

[VIDEO: Watch the full press conference.](#)

Earlier story:

Thomas "T.J." Lane III, the convicted Chardon High School shooter, has escaped from an Allen County prison with two other inmates.

Lima Police confirmed to The News-Herald that Lane, 19, escaped from Allen Correctional Facility on Sept. 11. With Lane was fellow inmate Clifford E. Opperud, 45.

A third inmate, who was not immediately identified, was captured, said Lima Police Sgt. Andy Green. A search was underway in woods and a residential area near the prison, he said, and the two escapees are considered dangerous.

Authorities said they do not believe the two men are armed, however. They had no further information on how the inmates escaped from prison. Green said the police were notified about 8 p.m. Thursday evening.

According to a [notice posted to Facebook](#), the men were wearing prison blues. Law enforcement warned motorists should not pick up hitch hikers and residents should not open their doors for strangers.

"The prosecutor's office is in the process of reaching out to the victim's families," said Geauga County Prosecutor Jim Flaiz. "We're going to be dealing with this as it happens."

Flaiz said he couldn't comment further but did confirm Lane as an escapee.

According to a [news release from Chardon Schools Superintendent Michael P. Hanlon early Friday morning](#),

"Local and State law enforcement have confirmed that T.J. Lane has escaped from an Allen County prison. Chardon Local School District officials have been in contact with law enforcement and are closely monitoring the situation.

"Our thoughts and prayers today go out to the families of Demetrius, Russell and Danny and all others affected by the tragedy as well as by the troubling events from Thursday evening.

"The safety and well-being of all students, staff and community remain our highest priority. Given the profound impact of these developments on our entire community, all schools in the Chardon Local School District will be closed on Friday, September 12, 2014, in order that students and staff may spend time with family and other forms of support to aid in the healing process. A decision concerning extracurricular activities will be made Friday morning.

"The school district will also provide as much social and emotional support for students, staff and community as possible during this difficult time. Therefore, the Chardon High School and Chardon Middle School buildings will be open Friday with counseling and other support service available in each school. Those seeking assistance or just wanting to talk are encouraged to come to either building.

"Chardon remains a strong and resilient community that has rallied around each other before and I am confident that we will continue to do so now and in the future. Chardon Schools along with local law enforcement officials will continue to monitor the developments throughout the night and will stay in close contact with our school community as this situation develops further."

Lane [pleaded guilty last year](#) to shooting three students in February 2012 at Chardon High School, east of Cleveland. He said he didn't know why he did it. He was [given three life sentences](#).

Prosecutors say Lane took a .22-caliber pistol and a knife to the school and [fired 10 shots at a group of students in the cafeteria](#). Daniel Parmertor and Demetrius Hewlin, both 16, and Russell King Jr., 17, were killed.

Lane was at Chardon waiting for a bus to the alternative school he attended, for students who haven't done well in traditional settings.

Before Lane's case went to adult court in 2012, a [juvenile court judge ruled that Lane was mentally competent](#) to stand trial despite evidence he suffers from hallucinations, psychosis and fantasies. At [his sentencing, Lane was defiant, smiling and smirking throughout](#), including while four relatives of the victims spoke.

During the sentencing, Lane entered the courtroom in a blue button down shirt which he then removed, revealing a white T-shirt with the word "KILLER" scrawled in black marker.

Reached Thursday at her home in Chardon, Dina Parmertor, mother of Daniel Parmertor, said of Lane's escape: "I'm disgusted that it happened. I'm extremely scared and panic stricken. I can't believe it."

As of February 2014, the prison held 1,645 inmates — eight of them maximum security inmates, including Lane, according to the [Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction](#).

Ian Friedman, Lane's former attorney, confirmed on his Twitter account that Lane had escaped from the Allen Correctional Facility around 8 p.m.

Authorities said Opperud was serving a sentence for aggravated robbery, burglary, and kidnapping.

The Associated Press contributed to this article.

Descriptions of the escapees from Lima Police:

Thomas "TJ" Lane III

age 19

5'8" / 125 lbs

brown hair / brown eyes

Originally from Chardon, Ohio

Clifford E Opperud

age 45

5'10" 175 lbs

blonde hair, blue eyes

Originally from Carlisle, Ohio

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The Associated Press contributed to this article

