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Evan Vucci/AP

Demonstrators participate in a "lie-in" during a protest in favor of gun control reform in front of the White House on Monday in Washington.

Trump weighs in on background checks

By CATHERINE LUCEY and MARIA DANILOVA
Associated Press

WEST PALM BEACH, Fla. — From the confines of his golf club, President Donald Trump offered support for a limited strengthening of federal background checks on gun purchases Monday while staying largely mum in the last few days about the victims of the Florida school massacre and the escalating debate about controls on weapons.

One side of that debate was represented outside the White House as dozens of teens spread their bodies across the pavement to symbolize the dead and call for stronger gun controls, a precursor to a march in Washington planned next month by survivors of the Parkland school shooting and supporters of their cause.

At his Florida club just 40 miles from a community ravaged by the shooting that left 17 dead last week, Trump gave a nod toward a specific policy action, with the White House saying he had spoken Friday to Sen. John Cornyn, a Texas Republican, about a bipartisan bill designed to strengthen the FBI database of prohib-

ited gun buyers.

Spokeswoman Sarah Huckabee Sanders qualified the support, stressing that talks continue and "revisions are being considered," but said "the president is supportive of efforts to improve the federal background check system."

The main action Trump has taken on guns in office has been to sign a resolution blocking an Obama-era rule designed to keep guns out of the hands of certain mentally disabled people. The president has voiced strong support for gun rights and the National Rifle Association.

The bipartisan background check legislation would be aimed at ensuring that federal agencies and states accurately report relevant criminal information to the FBI. It was introduced after the Air Force failed to report the criminal history of the gunman who slaughtered more than two dozen people at a Texas church.

The White House statement comes as shooting survivors and other young people press for more gun control in a rising chorus of grief and activism. Their "March for Our Lives" is

planned March 24 in Washington.

Ella Fesler, 16-year-old high school student in Alexandria, Virginia, was among the students at the "lie-in" in front of the White House. She said it was time for change, adding: "Every day when I say 'bye' to my parents, I do acknowledge the fact that I could never see my parents again."

But previous gun tragedies have not produced action in Congress. After the Las Vegas massacre in the fall, Republicans and Democrats in Congress talked about taking a rare step to tighten the nation's gun laws. Four months later, the only gun legislation that has moved in the House or Senate instead eases restrictions for gun owners.

Kristin Brown, co-president of the Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence, said the measure Trump discussed with Cornyn would help to enforce existing rules but would not close loopholes permitting loose private sales on the internet and at gun shows. She's pressing for a ban on assault-type weapons and for laws enabling family members, guardians or police to ask judges to strip

gun rights temporarily from people who show warning signs of violence.

"We need a comprehensive system," Brown said. "One of these isn't enough."

Trump, who visited first responders and some victims Friday, has focused his comments on mental health, rather than guns. The White House says the president will host a "listening session" with students and teachers this week and will discuss school safety with state and local officials. But they have offered no further details on who will attend those sessions.

Trump spent most of his weekend at his private Palm Beach estate, Mar-a-Lago. White House aides advised against golfing too soon after the shooting. But on President's Day, the avid golfer headed to his nearby golf club. The White House did not immediately answer questions about whether he was playing golf.

President Barack Obama took heavy criticism in 2014 when he went golfing during a vacation just minutes after denouncing the militants who had beheaded an American journalist. He later regretted playing golf so soon after the killing.

Hosts

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"If you're willing to open your home, then it will be a great experience," she said.

Most families are asked to house the participants for the week the full cast will be in town.

Up with People blends music, social action and international travel, aiming to empower young people to serve as positive agents of change.

The program's 100 participants represent 20 countries. The group is on a five-month world tour and will visit communities in the United States, Europe and Mexico.

Glynn County will be a stop on Up with People's 2018 tour.

The cast will perform their show "Live on Tour," on March 28 at 7 p.m. in Brunswick High School's gym.

Hollington's son traveled with Up with People from June 2016 to June 2017, and she said the experience broadened his worldview and his awareness of other cultures.

"It was wonderful," she said. "He got to travel mostly on the West coast of the United States, then he traveled to Mexico for several weeks. Then he was in about six European countries. It was very eye-opening for him and he enjoyed staying with host families like us,

but in different countries so he could experience the culture."

Host families are asked to provide a bed, as well as breakfast and most dinners during the week.

Cast members will also need transportation at the beginning and end of each day.

The cast members will be gone during the day, but they will spend most evenings at home with the family.

"You don't have to cater to their needs," Hollington said. "You don't have to worry about entertaining them all the time. Just let them be a part of your home and your family."

Cast members will be interested in learning about

life in Glynn County and about the host family with whom they're living, Hollington said.

"Don't worry about everything being perfect," she said. "They want to know what your family life is like, and they've stayed with other people before you and they'll stay with more people after ... They want to know what it's like living in South Georgia."

Host families will receive two tickets to Up with People's show.

Those interested in hosting are asked to contact Rani Rombauts, a promotion representative for Up with People, by calling 720-434-9270 or by emailing her at rrombauts@upwithpeople.org.

Lives

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program, a collaboration between Rotary District 6930 and MAP International, has been providing life-saving medications to indigent clinics in Brunswick and Valdosta since October. The initiative has already provided nearly 500 in-need patients with medications to treat hypertension, asthma, high cholesterol and diabetes.

In essence, Saving Lives with Medicine provides two clinics — the Coastal Medical Access Project in Brunswick and Partnership Health Center in Valdosta — with medications at no cost for patients who qualify.

MAP International is able to use its connections with pharmaceutical companies and other providers to access medications at no or reduced cost, and the Rotary club district provides funds to ship those medications to the two clinics monthly.

"We measure the success of our programs with one life saved at a time," said Martin Smith, a MAP International spokesman. "When you have people who don't have access to managing their high blood pressure or diabetes, you're talking about a real threat to lives. Locally, that's as important as anywhere."

More than a dozen Rotarians and other specialists are part of a Rotary club task force that oversees the program and coordinates with partner agencies, Thota said.

"Their skill sets include physicians, surgeons, pharmacists, lawyers, bankers, et cetera," Thota said of the task force's membership. "This group came together to figure out our project plan and how it will work, because it requires those professional skill sets."

In Brunswick, Saving Lives with Medicine has provided more than 350 in-need patients with the medicines they need but may not be able to afford.

Laura Johnson, a physician assistant with the Coastal Medical Access Project in Brunswick, said Saving Lives with Medicine has helped the clinic — operated by Southeast Georgia Health System — serve its clients.

"MAP International has provided us with free medications for acute illness and chronic medical conditions, such as diabetes, high cholesterol and hypertension," Johnson said. "Before MAP International's contribution, our patients were not

able to afford these medications, and they were not available through any other free-medication programs that (Coastal Medical Access Project) offers."

The three-year pilot program of Saving Lives with Medicine has been so successful that Rotary and MAP International are eyeing the possibility of expanding it to larger populations in Georgia, Thota said.

"We are ready to look at phase two, where clinics are catering to larger patient volumes," Thota said. "What I'm suggesting is that we look at new financial models, where we can bring in different sets of partners and Rotary can provide leadership and community connections."

Steve Stirling, president and CEO of MAP International, echoed Thota and said he supports expanding the program to new populations.

"The result of this pilot study exceeded our expectations," Stirling said. "MAP looks forward to expanding this program to additional communities."

While Thota isn't quite ready to name specific partners with which the program could expand, he did say he and other Saving Lives with Medicine representatives are eager to expand the program.

"Phase two could happen next year," he said. "Ideally, this could happen sooner than later."

Such an expansion could take the form of a partnership with a large health system. It could benefit local communities and health systems by tamping down the number of emergency room visits by patients who simply need medications for conditions like diabetes, Thota said.

Overall, Thota said the Saving Lives with Medicine project has been an opportunity to help Southeast Georgia's most vulnerable populations, as well as a chance for collaboration between the region's multitude of dedicated advocates.

"It is a pure joy to work with this group of talented professionals," he said. "MAP has been a tremendous partner."

Rotary Club District 6930 has more than 3,200 members in 63 clubs across Southeast Georgia, including in Macon, Augusta, Valdosta, Brunswick, St. Simons Island and Camden and Tift counties.

MAP International is a Christian nonprofit aid organization that provides medications and health supplies to in-need populations around the world.



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Shelter

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animals," Hill said.

Decorating the walls with vibrant designs is one means, but the animals can also be enriched through things like decorations or gardens that produce treats for the animals.

"Cats like catnip and that sort of thing. Dogs like to eat carrots, and they're absolutely fine for them to eat, and if someone were willing to put in lemongrass that would help keep the mosquitoes down, or plant citronella," Hill said. "The other thing I'd love to see is handmade bird feeders, or yard spinners or mobiles. You know, lots of different colors and sounds and smells that can enhance the place for the pets and visitors"

Hill said she'd welcome anyone who would like to

volunteer to provide handmade decorations or to maintain a garden at the shelter.

"At another shelter, there was a mother and daughter, and they came in once a week and refilled the bird feeders. That's what they could spare for their time, but that was a big help because the birds outside the windows was giving the cats a lot of mental stimulation," Hill said.

There are many other things she would like to do, but is holding back while the county constructs a new animal shelter in the public safety complex off the Ga. 25 Spur.

Hill has worked with the architect on the project, St. Simons Island engineering firm Ussery-Rule Architects, on making sure the building design includes as many features that will help with enrichment as possible.

"The architect we're

working with on the design of the new building is doing a fantastic job of helping us have a much nicer facility," Hill said.

The Glynn County Commission approved spending on the design work for the new shelter in October. The entire project was allotted \$1.5 million in Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax 2016 revenue.

Hill has also been looking to bring volunteers into the fold in other ways. A training day was held on Saturday for people interested in getting hands-on with the animals.

Volunteers were informed on how the shelter classifies dogs, their daily schedules and how to properly walk and socialize them. More training days will be held in the future, Hill said.

For more information on volunteer opportunities at the animal control shelter, call Hill at 912-554-7501.

Public Notice

**Coast Guard Beach Park Master Plan
Community Workshop Postponed**

**The master plan workshop planned for
Thursday, February 22 has been postponed.**