By Jan Schultz, The Imperial Republican News Editor

It almost seems like yesterday when the state of Nebraska, and likely the country, were shocked with a shooting spree in one of Omaha's upscale retail stores.

Dec. 5, 2007, is a day many will long remember when eight people died after a suicidal 19-year-old opened fire at the Von Maur store at the Omaha Westroads Mall, then killed himself.

Now, nearly a year since the incident, it's evident the human spirit helps all of us cope with such events, especially those who were directly involved.

A series of articles has been running in the Omaha newspaper this week about the approaching one-year anniversary, and much of what I read struck me. At this time of year, with Christmas near, what an awful time to have to remember such an event.

But, all of us can find strength and can learn how important hope and faith are in our lives after such tragedies.

The families of those who died have remained strong. A special "We Remember" commemorative gold pin has been made. The pins are being worn to show support for those who died and all who were involved.

In addition to the evidence of hope and faith, much other good came from the incident.

Heroes emerged, those who helped protect others in the store during the shootings; new friends were made as Von Maur customers and store workers were thrown together during the incident; and the community of Omaha, and the state as well, came together afterwards.

The Advent and Christmas seasons are ones of hope. In a year since one of the worst incidents to have hit Omaha and our state, it is gratifying to see how people rebound and continue to live their lives in hope.