



GINA FERAZZI / Los Angeles Times

Back at work less than a year after nearly being killed by a student, Rick Facciolo says he hasn't soured on children.

Principal Recovers From Attack

■ **Violence:** Rick Facciolo was shot in the face by an 8th-grader who accidentally killed himself soon after. The educator is back on the job after major plastic surgery.

By TOM GORMAN
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REDLANDS—The shooting of school principal Rick Facciolo had the trappings of a professional hit.

The gunman, an avid golfer, sneaked a shotgun into his home inside his bag of clubs; sawed it off so he could hide it under a jacket, then later walked calmly into the school office and, without saying a word, blasted a hole the size of a cantaloupe in Facciolo's face.

But there were some twists.

The gunman snacked on cookies and milk before heading off to kill Facciolo. He was 13 years old.

After he shot Facciolo, he slipped

outside on wet pavement and was killed when the 12-gauge shotgun discharged into his own chest.

Facciolo survived because the buckshot missed his carotid artery by less than an inch, and surgeons have since rebuilt the lower half of his face.

Perhaps most remarkable of all, Facciolo is back on the job, refusing to dwell on what he calls *the incident* last January.

He won't speculate why one of his school's eight-grade students wanted to kill him—although the boy had a beef because, with the dress code at Sacred Heart School, baggy pants were taboo.

He can't analyze the look in the boy's eyes when he raised the pistol-grip shotgun to his shoulder and took aim, because Facciolo never saw him.

But nor has Facciolo soured on kids, and today he's still at work, at the same desk at the same school, with bandages to protect the lingering wound from the chaffing of a button-down shirt.

He suggests that his stoicism springs from his childhood. "My parents would say, 'Things won't always go your way

but you have to make the best of it. Life is good but it's not always easy,'" he said.

The "incident" occurred Jan. 23 after a teacher brought John Sirola into the principal's office for a sit-down. The youngster had attended the private Catholic grade school the previous year, but spent the summer with his father in Arizona because of his mother's hope that the incorrigible child could be better disciplined.

When the new school year began, his father sent Sirola back to his mother in Redlands and he was re-enrolled at Sacred Heart where, she figured, the school's structure would serve him well.

But he challenged the school's dress code for boys—traditional blue slacks and white polo shirts—by wearing baggy pants. A meeting with Mr. Fash, as everyone calls the principal, might straighten him out once and for all.

The meeting went well, Facciolo thought, and Sirola left campus, walking down a street framed by trees and old homes with front porches and white picket fences.

Please see **RECOVERY, A24**