

Matt Update

January 26, 2015

Ten years ago today Matt sent, what would turn out to be, his last email to me. Tomorrow I will have sent my last back...that would unknowingly be our last correspondence in this life.

Fortunately for me, my very last words to him were words of praise and adoration of how proud I was of him and how much I loved him. In my worst days I cherished that he knew how much I loved and adored him.

Each year I struggle to write my annual update, January is a very hard time for me as all the memories of every minute of Matt's last days come rushing back at will. I find myself taking a moment to push back the pain and wipe away a fallen tear I could not control. Even though the pain is always in my heart I get stronger with every passing year. And what a year this has been...

For the last ten years I have been formulating in my head where I hoped all our hard work would take us. Help people recognize hazing, as opposed to bullying. Change the mindset of our young people to find unacceptable, what for centuries they have been conditioned to believe was a right of passage. But how do we realize our dream? Documentaries, talk shows, new shows, radio shows, magazine articles, letters were all good but we needed more. A bigger voice, a greater reach, something IMPACTFUL!

Then in November 2012 I received a call from an amazing lady by the name of Hilary Roberts Grant. Hilary told me that Indigo Films had hired her to collect information about Matt's story for an upcoming new show, the then "Bio Channel now know as A&E Network", was planning to air stories about the dangers in college. They were looking for true stories and she was researching it for them. But by the end of January it was dropped, only to be picked up again a few months later, completed and aired August 2014. The reaction was overwhelming. I knew this was a game changer. The only problem now was how to I convince Indigo Films and A&E Network to give me the license to use it?

Two months of emails, texts and phone calls, and emails, texts and phones calls, it seemed like a lifetime. But it was worth it. So courtesy of A&E Network we were able to put the movie/documentary on Matt's website (thank you Frankie) and can take it into high schools and colleges. Woo Hoo! This was a victory!!!

The show ignited our efforts and has allowed us to move forward with what we had always dreamed to accomplish in Matt's memory and that is to expand our efforts enabling us to reach more people and make a BIGGER difference in his memory. And thus...the **AHA! Movement** was born this year.

The AHA! Movement is a non-profit organization created in Matt's Memory, our purpose is to save the lives of our young people by educating them on the dangers of hazing, not to be confused with bullying.

So talks began of programs we can implement in the HS and colleges around the film, and expanding to how we can create age appropriate programs for elementary and Jr. HS students, and much more. Most of

you may or may not be aware that hazing starts in elementary schools. But with the recent outbursts of torturous HS hazings taking place in the last 6 months we are eager to get into the HS as soon as possible.

Our first **AHA!** event will be in Chico on February 2nd the 10th Anniversary of when Matt was killed. A group of us will be going up on Sunday, Feb 1st to distribute flyers inviting students and others to the event the following night, going door to door to fraternities and sororities as well as downtown establishments. Sunday night at 10:30pm, the time when Matt walked into the frat house for the last time, we are going to leave flowers and 10 candles in front of the house where he was last ALIVE.

On Monday the 2nd, we will have a table in the BMU Atrium Area at Chico State where we will share Matt's story, talk about hazing, handout literature and invite to the main event that evening. The "EVENT" At 5pm we will be showing Matt's movie at the BMU, followed by a walking vigil that will begin at the steps of the University at Chestnut. We will walk down Chestnut to W 4th Street, taking us by the old fraternity house where Matt was killed (now the Jewish Community Center). We will continue down W 4th Street to downtown City Plaza where we will gather to remember Matt. Anyone that can make it is more than welcome and encouraged to join us.

Since this trip is not feasible for a lot of you if you wouldn't mind lighting a candle in Matt's memory Monday night, posting it on Facebook and tagging me at www.facebook.com/debbiesmithmm and adding #AHA!Movement that would be awesome! And if you took it a step further and posted it on www.facebook.com/ahamovement (and LIKE our page too please), it would be greatly appreciated.

We are extremely excited at the difference we know we are going to make and so appreciate all of you for always caring enough to keep up with what it going on in our efforts to bring awareness to the dangers of hazing.

Our foundation is in its early "baby" stages, so while we await our non-profit status we are going to need funding to help us with our journey. If you are someone that makes donations to worthy causes we ask that you think about donating to the AHA!Movement. No donation is too small or too big, lol. If you are part of a corporation that issues grants we would love to be able to apply. If you can help us in anyway with fundraising we are open. We are currently working our branding and our website, and getting our office officially up and running. If you would like to make a donation please go to <http://www.gofundme.com/kw5bf4> and if possible please share on Facebook and Twitter.

If you would like to contact me for any reason, please feel free to reply to this email, you can call or text me at 209-470-7116 or message me on Facebook.

Please remember life is short and memories are precious. Time goes by too fast; in the blink of an eye...don't miss out. MAKE MEMORIES!!! And when you are feeling down, remember the good things in your life and be thankful you have them life is a blessing.

"Hug your children and tell them you love them EVERYDAY!"

God Bless....

Love and Smiles,

Debbie, MM

www.wemissyoumatt.com