

January 6, 2009

It is beyond imaginable to think that we are starting yet another year without our precious **Matt**. February 2nd will be the fourth anniversary of worst day of our lives. As we do every year, we will be in Chico to set up **Matt's** memorial so no one will ever forget what happened to him there or forget the wonderful person he was in life. Those that would like to join us are more than welcome. We will place flowers, put up pictures and light candles in front of the house beginning at 10:30pm on Sunday, February 1st the time in which **Matt** entered that house for the last time. We will return to Pleasant Hill on the 2nd to set up his memorial at home. I hope if you can, you will light a candle and say a prayer in **Matt's** memory.

Last year at this time, I wrote that we were approaching the beginning of the first trial in which **Matt's Law** would be tested April 2008, for a hazing that was committed in Chico no less, April 2007 four months after **Matt's Law** became official. That trial has still yet to take place and is now set for this April 2009. As we have learned the wheels of justice can move very slow.

This makes me grateful for how expedient our time in court really was in comparison, when at the time it seemed like an excruciatingly long and agonizingly drawn out process. What saddens me is that a hazing death has occurred at Cal Poly with the Sigma Alpha Epsilon (SAE) during this time. On December 2, 2008, 18-year-old Carson Starkey died of alcohol poisoning during a hazing ritual into SAE fraternity. The SLO police are currently gathering evidence to bring those involved in Starkey's death up on charges under **Matt's Law**. I can only hope that Carson's parents do not have to wait two years for justice to be served.

Another hazing incident occurred in San Diego just over a year ago, where but by the grace of God, the young man lived, (to the amazement of his doctors) but suffers life long injuries. The last I heard **Matt's Law** charges were being considered in this case as well. It appears our young people are not learning, or if they are, they are just not taking it seriously. Death is serious death is forever in this lifetime.

While all eyes were on the FIRST ever case, under **Matt's Law** in Chico, one can only wonder that if the trial in that case had been started in a timelier manner and the accused had gone to jail, a lesson would have been learned. Then maybe, just maybe, those involved in these two incidents would have thought twice before performing dangerous and fatal hazing rituals on their pledges. But with month after month of delays and appeals almost two years have gone by and nothing. How is anyone to take it seriously?

What I find truly offensive in the SAE hazing is the reaction of the family members of the surviving pledges and fraternity members. They are *upset* because their sons are being inconvenienced by the investigation into Carson's death due to illegal acts of hazing. One has gone so far as to refer to the police as petty Gestapo because they are enforcing **Matt's Law**. I imagine if it had been their child who had died they would be thanking the police for trying to find out what happened to him.

These people are not taking into consideration the intense pain and devastation Carson's loved ones are experiencing and will continue to suffer through for the rest of their lives. They were *upset* because their sons were inconvenienced and may not make it home for the holidays in a timely manner. Carson's family did not have their son home for the holidays they will never have their son home again. Have these people no heart? Where is the compassion here? It breaks my heart that another boy is dead, it tears me up inside to think of his family reeling in pain having to deal with the unimaginable, something no parent should ever have to live through, the loss of their child.

Their son is dead and those selfish people were upset because, their own son or nephew may not be home for Christmas, may not be prepared for a test, or may have had to turn over their cell phone, laptop or wallet as evidence! They are ALIVE aren't they? A boy is DEAD because of them! Let's get our priorities straight here.

Those fraternity members broke the law and a boy is dead because of it, and now they must face the consequences of their actions. If you would like to help the Starkey family, I encourage you to write to the District Attorney's office in San Luis Obispo to enforce **Matt's Law** and prosecute those involved to the fullest extent of it. We may not be able to bring Carson back to his family but we can at least do our best to help them get the justice they and their son deserve.

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Please remember to talk to your children, grandchildren, neighborhood kids, nieces, and nephews, anyone you can, to let them know how dangerous these rituals can be. And if they are aware that they are going on, teach them to please alert the authorities, they can do it anonymously, just do it. The next victim could be someone close to you.

I would like to recommend a good book for you, your teenagers, and young adults to read, that will help prepare them for what awaits them. It will help you to understand as well. It is called Protect Yourself In College and is written by a wonderful author, Tom Kane, whom I have come to consider a friend. It is a great and easy read and has had wonderful reviews, and you don't have to be going away to college to get a lot out of this book. I encourage you to pick one up or order online today.

Please remember to say a pray for Carson, his family and friends, may God be with them in these darkest of days.

"Hug your children and tell them you love them everyday."

Love,
Debbie, MM