

Hello Everyone

FIVE years! I can't believe it has been five years since we lost Matt to hazing. Five years since we've had our cherished family hugs, five years since I've seen Matt's smiling face or heard his infectious laugh, five years since he and I have sat and talked, or since I've heard those precious words, "I love you mom." Five years since I watched him turn and walk away for the last time, not realizing I would never see him again. Five years since I heard the most devastating words of my life... "*I'm sorry Debbie, Matt didn't make it.*" Every parents nightmare. When I talk to some friends and family I hear "it feels like it's been longer" but for me it seems like yesterday. The ache in my heart is forever present no matter how much time goes by. Our lives were changed forever that day. God, I miss my son.

What I find scary about this anniversary is five years before Matt was killed, Adrian Heideman's life was cut short at Chico State due to hazing. At that time it wasn't supposed to ever happen in Chico again, yet five years later it happened to Matt.

We are doing our best to bring awareness to the dangers of hazing but despite our best efforts it continues to occur, and young people continue to die. This year, in Matt's memory, we are setting up a Hazing Awareness Table in the Bell Memorial Union (BMU) atrium area on Chico State campus, Monday, February 1<sup>st</sup> from 11am – 2pm. All the students who were at the school when Matt was killed are gone and new innocent unsuspecting students have taken their place. We don't want to hear those words again, "this is the last time this will happen here". We want to do whatever we can to assure Matt, is the last time it happens there. We want to break the cycle.

Last year at this time I wrote about a young man, 18 year old Carson Starkey, who was killed in a hazing initiation at San Luis Obispo on December 2, 2008. Since then four men have been brought up on hazing charges under Matt's Law, two of whom are facing felony charges. It is disheartening because for me Matt's Law didn't work. The idea of Matt's Law was to work as a deterrent, a way to make people think before they hazed so we didn't have to lose another life, so another family didn't have to suffer. It was meant to be a message to our young people that now there would be consequences for their actions. And now it must be enforced or it serves no purpose at all. It breaks my heart but these young men must go to jail.

Sadly, this case has been drawn out by the defense, much to the suffering of Carson's parents Scott and Julia, and his family and friends. When a child is taken, especially in such a senseless way, many people suffer. As a parent, losing a child is our greatest fear and the most excruciatingly unbearable pain one can ever endure. In order to prevent the continued suffering, we must educate our young people about just how dangerous hazing can be and teach them that it is okay to speak out against it. Don't be afraid to say NO. Don't be intimidated into doing something you don't want to do. Be able to stand up in a crowd and say STOP! Take it upon yourselves to call for help when necessary.

As I did last year, I would like to recommend an extremely informative book, Protect Yourself In College written by a wonderful author, Tom Kane. 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.

As we do every year, we will be setting up a memorial for Matt in Chico so no one will ever forget what happened to him there or forget the wonderful young man he was in life. Those that would like to join us are more than welcome. We will be holding a candlelight vigil in front of the old frat house, now Chabad Jewish Center on the corner of W. 4<sup>th</sup> and Chestnut from 7pm – 8pm. Thank you to Rabbi Zwiebel for graciously allowing us to do so.

We will return to Pleasant Hill on the 2<sup>nd</sup> to set up Matt's memorial at home and remember our precious son in the place where he grew up. I hope if you can, you will light a candle and say a prayer in Matt's memory. Please remember Carson and his family in your prayers as they prepare for their days in court, may God be with them and keep them strong.

Thank you for your continued support. God bless you all.

Love,  
Debbie, MM

[www.wemissyoumatt.com](http://www.wemissyoumatt.com)

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

Thank you to KHSL Channel 12 News Chico, for helping bring attention to our efforts on Sunday, January 31 with an interview and Monday, February 1 broadcasting some of the events.