

Utah State University Candle Light Vigil
Tuesday, September 27, 2005

Cody Bingham, Agriculture Senator, Associated Students of Utah State University

As students of the college of Agriculture and Utah State University and the surrounding community, we are now banding together to support our fellow Aggies at this difficult time. The families of loved ones are in our prayers and thoughts. The outreach of hope, love, and support truly shows what it means to be a true Aggie and part of such a special Utah State community.

Yesterday afternoon several students and their instructor set out on a wonderful, educational field trip. Due to what police have said was a blow out of one of the van's tires, the accident then followed that most of us are familiar with. During the accident and in the hours following, the following individuals passed away: Steven D. Bair, Ephrata, Washington; Dusty Dean Fuhriman, Tremonton, Utah; Justin W. Gunnell, Wellsville, Utah; Justin Huggins; Bear River City, Utah; Jonathan Dennis Jorgensen, Hyrum, Utah; Curtis A Madsen, Payson, Utah; Ryan Wayne McEntire, West Point, Utah; Bradley G. Wilcox, Salt Lake City, Utah; and their instructor, Evan Parel Parker. Funeral services for many of these individuals have been arranged and are posted on the USU web page. Remaining in critical condition in Ogden hospitals are Jared Paul Nelson from Logan, Utah, and Robert Petersen from Elwood, Utah.

In front of me are eleven roses; nine white for these individuals that are deceased and two yellow for those in hospitals; and they have graciously been donated from the College of Agriculture students. It is our privilege to have with us tonight two individuals related to two individuals who have deceased; Emily Kunz, who was the fiancée of Ryan McEntire, and Emily Fuhriman, a cousin to Dusty Fuhriman. We appreciate their presence here with us tonight.

In light of what has occurred, flags were flown at half mast today, and white ribbons began to be distributed and have been distributed throughout the remainder of the day. Shortly following the accident, the idea came forth to have these ribbons as a small token of hope, love, and support for all of those involved. And though we all have a grand desire to help, this is a small effort that we can all do to remember those individuals who have passed on and express our prayers of hope for those individuals who are still suffering.

We have also coordinated with the Utah State University Development office in starting a memorial fund entitled the Agricultural Technology Memorial Fund, and donations to this fund are being accepted throughout the week. For information on how to make such a donation, call the USU Development office at 797-1158.

USU Counseling Center staff will also be available throughout this week to assist students and/or faculty/staff, individually or in groups. Those desiring support are

encouraged to stop by TSC 306 or call 797-1012. At times the impact of such trauma may not be realized for a day or two. Individuals have a variety of coping strategies. As a result, please notify the Counseling Center as needs arise. Staff members will be available for outreach or consultation, and handouts listing resources and stages of grief are also available.

Tomorrow on the quad we will have available large posters for each of the individuals involved in this accident, and we encourage all wanting to offer words of comfort and support for the families and individuals to come out and sign or briefly write on these posters. My final comments tonight are best reflected by an email that was received today from the Dixie State College Student Government; and I quote,

“The loss of any one student from any college or university affects us all. It does not matter whether it is near or far, a couple of miles, or clear across the state, we mourn with you. Our hearts and prayers go out to you, the student body, the faculty, the staff, and the families. Yet amid all the darkness, hope still shines brightly the distance. Let us never cease to forge onward, ever remembering.”

Thank You.

Noelle Cockett, Interim Provost and Dean, College of Agriculture

This has been an incredibly sad 26 hours. I have known Evan Parker, the instructor for several years. I know of his devotion to the students and the Ag Machinery Technology Program. I know of his connections and his relationships with the faculty and students in ASTE. But as I look out and I see all of you here, I am comforted by your presence. I know that you have come as students and faculty and staff across the university to honor these students and this instructor. I know that you have come to honor them, their spirit and their memory. And I hope that this honor is in some way a comfort to the student's and Evan's family, and their friends and all of the people that know these students and have been touched by them. So thank you for coming and thank you for honoring them by your presence.

Quinn Millet, Student Body President, Associated Students of Utah State University

I heard yesterday at 5:30 p.m. of a fatal roll-over car accident in Tremonton. And when I initially heard, I think I had the same reaction that most students did; and that was one of shock and somewhat disbelief. As I came to know more of the accident and what was involved, I realized some of our best had been taken, some of those that represent Aggies at their best.

The College of Agriculture, like all colleges, had its own environment, its own culture. There seems to be a real sense of family, of community, amongst the Agricultural students. I credit this in part, based on the ones that I know personally, to their upbringing. A lot of them came from rural backgrounds, and farming backgrounds and

there is a real sense of honesty, transparency, and very forthrightness with those students. They really did represent the best of what Utah State has to offer. Along with that, they were tied in close with the community. The large majority came from Cache Valley and surrounding areas. This, along with their involvement in FFA and other student organizations, tied in closely with the community.

The loss that is felt by students tonight is felt by the community, the state, and across the nation. This evening, as tragic as it is, we have two options: we have the option of focusing on their death or commemorating their lives by championing the values that they lived for - the ones of honesty, integrity, and hard work. I hope that each one of us makes the decision to take from this something positive and to please better our lives for their sakes.

On behalf of ASUSU and the students of Utah State University, we extend our condolences and our heart felt sorrows to the families of those that have been affected, as well as the families of Jared and Robert, who are still fighting for their life. Thank you.

Gary Straquadine, Associate Vice Provost, Utah State University

Wow! Thanks for coming. Our kids feel it. They need it tonight. I am Gary Straquadine. My department head asked me to represent the department. Why? I am not sure. I have spent 17 years with ASTE; 8-1/2 as their department head, and this is the hardest thing I have ever had to do. Because we care, and we care so much, and we share. Six degrees of separation; that might be true in your department. It's four degrees in our department, four degrees of separation between our hearts, our heads, and our love for agriculture and our love for our students.

Tonight we're going to share a flame. That flame you have means so much to us. It tells me that that flame will show and glow the love we have for each other tonight. With that flame, with that light though, comes a shadow, and that shadow is what we sense today. Our fear, our grief, our sadness in what we have lost, for what we share and experience tonight.

I'm a teacher. I have been a teacher for 26 years; high schools, colleges. Tonight I find my limitation. I find I can't do it. I find my failure. Why? Because I can't explain to you why this happened and I can't make you understand; because I don't know myself. I can't teach that secret formula to make you all go home and feel great about anything. But I can tell you and I can ask you to do what I have to do tonight, and that is to accept the Lord's will in my life; the Lord's grand plan for us all.

I hope you will look to your faith, you'll accept His will in your life, share with others your pain. Don't carry it alone folks. Today has been a great day as my students and my colleagues have shared so much; the joy, the pain. We don't need to do it alone. Give it away. Give it away so that we will all grow, so that we will remember them tonight. Thanks so much for coming. ASTE loves you all. Goodbye.

Stan Albrecht, president, Utah State University

Yesterday evening, shortly after 5:30 p.m. when we first started hearing news reports of a horrible accident, and then a relatively short time after learning that it was an accident that affected us, Utah State University, our students, our family. As we realized the magnitude of what was happening, all of us began to gather in Old Main Hall, Champ Hall, vice presidents, chief of staff, deans, student leadership. Without requests, without summons, you all came to offer help.

We went through an enormous and difficult evening. And perhaps the most poignant part of that evening, as we used a large whiteboard in one of the offices, we began to record the names of our students who are affected. And all of a sudden it started to really take on a human taste as we wrote down names and addresses, and ages; names of moms and dads; names of spouses. And we began the effort of making sure all are properly contacted.

As we went through last evening, it was a difficult time. I think we all felt a lot of emotion, and most felt it was pretty much under control. And then for me during the course of this day, with lots of contacts, media, news conferences, meetings with students, meetings with faculty, we felt again a lot of emotions we had pretty much under control. And it was only when I came here tonight and looked at you, the students at Utah State University, that my ability to maintain my control was lost.

So thank you, thank you for being here. Thank you for sharing this time with us. I can tell you that as difficult as this time is, I have never, never felt so proud to be associated with this University, and it is because of you. So thank you again for this time.

I have received many, many phone calls today; phone calls from the governor, regents, legislators and trustees; phone calls from a number of presidents from around the United States, all extending to you their love and best wishes. Late this afternoon I received a phone call from a president of another University that had experienced a tragedy somewhat similar to ours. And he had one bit of advice. He said, "Stan, when you talk to your students, tell them it is okay to cry." So it is okay to cry.

Again, let me thank you for being here, and let me thank my colleagues for the incredible work that they have done over the last number of hours.

I have had the opportunity today to visit with eight of the eleven families; I will visit with the other three in the morning. And without exception, as we have been visiting with those families, there was a common theme, and that theme was, "My son, my daughter, my husband, was so proud to be at Utah State University; always wanted to be an Aggie; never wanted to be anything else. And so like you, make them ever true Aggies."

So thank you again for sharing this evening with me, and as my colleagues have said, peace and God bless. Thank you.

