

Family still waiting for answers in Jeremy Lum's death

June 28, 2010

LATHROP - It's been a year since tragedy struck the Lum family in Lathrop with the untimely death of the then-29-year-old University of California, Berkeley graduate Jeremy Lum.

But feelings are still very raw.

And family members are still waiting for Lathrop Police and San Joaquin County Sheriff to give them answers to what they have steadfastly described as the "mistaken arrest" of their loved one. Police believed Jeremy Lum was intoxicated when they found him at a street corner near his home, but family members said he was simply experiencing a bipolar episode.

On Thursday, July 8, at 8:30 p.m., family and friends of Jeremy, along with the many supporters of Justice for Jeremy which was formed to raise public awareness to mental illness, will hold a candlelight vigil at the site where he was picked up by police. That location is the corner of Lathrop Road and Woodfield Drive right in front of Woodfield Park.

The same group will gather again the following day at 7 a.m. at the San Joaquin County Jail parking lot, located at 7000 Michael Canlis Boulevard in French Camp, where Jeremy was last seen alive. That was the time he was released from jail, where he was kept for seven hours overnight, without shoes or a vehicle. He vanished soon after his release, prompting a massive search only to end a few days later with the discovery of his body floating in the San Joaquin River west of the county jail.

Explaining the reason behind the candlelight memorial at sunset, around the time Jeremy was picked up by police, and the gathering at the county jail, Jeremy's aunt, Connie Lum Perez explained, "We are committed to changing the public safety agencies' lack of awareness, training, and procedures concerning mentally ill persons. The mentally ill need medical intervention, not jailing, to get through a crisis. The City of Lathrop and San Joaquin County are still lacking in this area."

In their desire to spare others of their heartache and tragedy, and in an effort to help police as well as other public agencies and the general public become more aware of mental illness and specifically bipolar disorder, the Lum family in May offered \$500 with additional future donations to be used for crisis-intervention training of Lathrop police.

It was this family tragedy which also prompted Lum-Perez to speak before the council earlier this week and voice her support for a Lathrop Police Department, and to join in the chorus to end contractual police services with the county Sheriff's office.

"Remember a year ago when we were desperate, desperate for help?" she said, recalling the tragic events that began on July 8, 2009.