

Family and friends use death to spur cause

Database sought for victims of psychological disorders

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Jeremy Lum was ahead of the curve academically, someone who enjoyed college for the sheer joy of learning.

He loved to work on cars.

He had a memory for movies and would challenge friends and family with famous dialogue, asking what film it was from.

Lum was an athlete. He played football, wrestled and competed in the pole vault at Sierra High School, but his real love was surfing.

Mostly, the 29-year-old who was diagnosed with bipolar disorder and drowned after being released from the San Joaquin County Jail in July was a caring, loving son, nephew, grandson, brother, cousin and friend. It's those qualities that those who knew him best remember, and that's what's driving them to keep his memory alive. The Lum family

His musical tastes ran the gamut from Metallica to Garth Brooks.

hopes to establish a database for victims of psychological disorders so the anguish the Lums have gone through need not be endured by others.

His high school friends have organized the Jeremy Lum Memorial Poker Tournament for tonight as a fundraiser for the cause.

His family has a memorial march planned for Saturday. It will begin in front of the County Jail and proceed to downtown Lathrop, his aunt Cindy Lum said. Her sister Connie is going to walk barefoot, which is the condition Jeremy Lum was in upon his release.

Lum was arrested July 8 not far from his home when he tried to enter a stranger's house. That family said he seemed confused. He was arrested for public intoxication, but family members believe his behavior was a result of his medicines or lack of them.

Released the next morning without his family members having been contacted, Jeremy Lum walked out of the jail without a phone and with no shoes on his feet. His body was found three days later in the San Joaquin River.

Friends and relatives are still coping with the reality that such a promising life could end so tragically.

"There was nothing I couldn't turn to Jeremy for," said Nikki Alvarado, who dated him off and on for eight years, beginning in 1998 when both were high school seniors. "There was no way he'd ever let me down.

He was my everything. I always knew with Jeremy around, he'd never let anything happen to me.

"That's why it really hurts that we let something happen to him."

Drowning was the official cause of death, but his bipolar condition led to that end. Alvarado was with Lum when he received the diagnosis at age 25.

"He was extremely brave," she said. "It was a rough journey. He had difficulties finding the different medicines, but he was extremely brave and analytical. He listened to everything the doctors had to say and tried to get it under control."

Still, he was quieter and more withdrawn after the diagnosis, she said.

His best friend from high school, Nick Glogovac, noticed it, too.

"He was a different person," Glogovac said. "He lost his spunk the last few years. He kept to himself more."

Lum's family believes he may have vomited after taking his medicine the day of his arrest, and the lack of medication may have led to his uncharacteristic behavior.

"People don't understand the bipolar thing," Cindy Lum said. "The sad fact is an episode is two or three missed pills away. Or lack of sleep."

The nephew Cindy Lum remembers was a brilliant kid who was extremely close to his grandmother, May Lum.

"He always loved his family first," Cindy Lum said. "He had a strong inner circle. When he trusted you, he was very loyal. Family came first. That's why he ended up back in Lathrop after (graduating from

University of California) Berkeley. He loves my mom, his grandmother. Besides his brothers, she was the most important person to him."

To Glogovac, Jeremy Lum was the smart kid who wasn't challenged by high school.

"We both played year-round sports," Glogovac said. "We were on the wrestling team together. We both were Raiders fans. We were on the same level intellectually. He was the only guy I could talk to about life philosophies. Our intellect connected us. That, and our love for fun."

For fun, the two played poker, which is what prompted Glogovac to organize the poker tournament.

"I was trying to put something together he would have loved to be a part of," Glogovac said.

A number of people volunteered to make it happen. Alvarado's employer, the Light Group, which operates restaurants and nightclubs, donated the grand prize of a Las Vegas weekend.

Money raised will eventually go toward helping others, which friends and family say is something else he would have wanted.

At the time of his death, Lum, who had a philosophy degree from UC Berkeley, was enrolled in a nursing program at Modesto Junior College.

Jeremy Lum wanted to be a traveling nurse - to combine helping others with seeing the world.

"I didn't feel it was the right direction for him," Glogovac said. "I think it was something that sounded better than it was. He was the kind of guy who needed to be challenged. This guy's intellect was through the roof. He needed something that would make him think more." The idea of contributing to society, though, appealed to him, Glogovac said.

"He was selfless," Glogovac said. "It wasn't about him but about how he could give back. That's what personified him the most."

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