

## Family stages silent protest at City Hall

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LATHROP – Connie Lum Perez and Dorothea Lum were among the people who packed Lathrop City Hall's council chambers to honor recently retired police chief Dolores Delgado.

But they were not there to share the plaudits that everybody else heaped on the outgoing police chief. They were there to stage a silent protest in connection with the August 2009 death of Jeremy Lum, the 28-year-old philosophy major graduate of UC Berkeley whose body was found at the San Joaquin River after he was released from the San Joaquin County Jail after being kept there overnight. He was also suffering from a bipolar disorder when he was picked up by Lathrop deputies the night before.

"We are here to make sure Jeremy is remembered," said Perez who was holding a small placard with a photograph that showed her and her late nephew jointly celebrating their birthdays. They were both born in June – Jeremy on the first, and Lum on the 16th – but always celebrated the day together with their extended family.

The colored photograph in Dorothea Lum's small placard showed a sleeping Jeremy as a baby.

"We're here as family members who are grieving and heart-broken," Perez said.

Asked if they blamed the police chief for what happened to Jeremy, the two answered at the same time. Lum said, "Yes." Perez said no but said she believed that what happened to her nephew "could have been helped." Instead, she said, "our request (to the Lathrop police and Sheriff's office) was denied."

Perez added, "We are here to keep everybody aware of what the issues are."

While taking note of the many who expressed their thanks to Delgado and their praises for everything she has done to the community of Lathrop, Perez said in an e-mail sent to the Bulletin, "not everyone is sorry she's gone and let me be the first in that line."

She also touched on some of the issues that she mentioned.

"What if, during all of our requests for help to the LPD, Jeremy could've been alive and found? What if, when Jerry (Jeremy's father and Perez's brother) asked for search dogs early on because Jeremy was barefoot and the scent was strong, he could have been alive and found? What if he were (Delgado's) beloved family member who was missing? Would she still have walked out of the LPD office at closing time without so much as a glance to the family in crisis?" Perez asked.

Following Jeremy's death, his family started to work on creating a database that law enforcement agencies could use to identify people with mental illness, and to establish an information warehouse of family and friends that can be contacted during emergencies in the hope that others would be spared of the pain and tragedy that their family just went through.

Jeremy was picked up by Lathrop police in a residential front yard reportedly disoriented while he and his dog Attila were apparently headed to Perez's home not far from his house in the old central part of town. Lathrop police took the dog back to his home, but he was taken to the county jail because authorities reportedly believed he was under the influence. He was released from jail early in the morning the following day, barefoot and without any means of transportation, and then vanished. Following a massive land and air search which included his father who, ironically, is also a pilot and a member of a citizens rescue unit, his body was found floating in the San Joaquin River not far from the Sheriff's Office in French Camp.

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