

Lathrop family turns tragedy into mission to help others

LATHROP - Every day for the past month as she passed the corner of Lathrop Road and Woodfield Drive, Connie Lum has felt nothing but sadness.

The intersection is near her home and the homes of her mother and brother, it is also the location where her nephew was arrested on July 9 for alleged public intoxication. That arrest ended with Jeremy Lum, a 29-year-old with bipolar disorder, being released from the San Joaquin County Jail before anyone in the family was notified. Three days later, his body was found in the San Joaquin River.

Rather than rail against the circumstances of their loss, Lum family members have made it their mission to help others.

They hope to create a database that law enforcement agencies could use to identify those with mental health issues and have contact information for family members or friends who could be called in case of emergencies.

First, though, the family needed to celebrate their love of Jeremy Lum, and did so with a candlelight vigil on Sunday night at the intersection.

"I needed something positive," Connie Lum said before the memorial that attracted about 80 friends and family members.

Johnnie Clark Jr., pastor of Living World Christian Center in Lathrop, said Jeremy Lum was in a better place, with a God who loves him more than any of us can know.

"The two times I met him, he came to help me," Clark said, later explaining Jeremy Lum had repaired a door in the building used as his church, a building owned by the Lum family. "Jeremy was a helper, and help is now being given to him."

The University of California, Berkeley graduate, who was diagnosed with bipolar disorder when he was 25, was remembered as a jokester who loved to laugh.

His father, Jerry, remembered him as someone who was caring. It was why Jerry Lum chose two songs from a CD of music featuring a collection of street musicians from around the world to benefit Playing For Change, which seeks to open music schools worldwide.

Jerry Lum had hoped to give the CD to his son. Instead, he played it for him and hoped he could hear it.

Saying it was common humanity that brought the gathering of people together on Sunday night, Jerry Lum said "I believe Jeremy would still be with us if any of the public officials who spent any time with him during those eight hours had followed the dictates of humanity." Instead, his son was released without shoes, transportation and his needed medication and never made it home.

The vigil was a step in the healing process, and for Connie Lum, it worked.

"I can drive past that corner and remember the love and concern that was left there," she said.

By Lori Gilbert of [TheRecord](#)