



# CU students, administrators mark anniversary of freshman's death

## 6,800 white flags planted as reminders of alcohol dangers

By Heath Urie

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Early Friday morning, about a dozen University of Colorado students and administrators gathered at a chilly and wet Norlin Quad to plant 6,800 small white flags — each in memory of a young person who died from alcohol in the four years since a CU freshman was found dead from alcohol poisoning.

In the middle of the memorial, which will remain on the campus through Wednesday, a single green flag marks the life of Lynn Gordon “Gordie” Bailey Jr.

Bailey, a CU student, was found dead from alcohol poisoning in the Chi Psi fraternity on Sept. 17, 2004.

The CU student group GORD — Guidelines and Objectives on Responsible Drinking — hopes the memorial will turn some heads in the days leading to the Wednesday anniversary of Bailey’s death.

“It’s a reminder that we’re not invincible,” said Ramon Rodriguez, a senior and president of G.O.R.D. who befriended Bailey in the short few weeks he was a CU student. “Let’s try and change our habits.”

An 18-year-old freshman from Dallas, Bailey died of acute alcohol poisoning at the off-campus Chi Psi house.

The organization’s national headquarters later dissolved the fraternity’s Boulder chapter.

With their shoes and faces sopping wet from the morning rain, Rodriguez and the other intrepid volunteers trudged through the campus grass to plant the flags — and to stand watch over the memorial they built to tell Bailey’s story to passers-by.

Through Wednesday, members of GORD will stand at the vigil from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. each day distributing water and talking with students about binge drinking and the dangers of alcohol abuse.

“What I’m hoping will happen is this will remind people to do something different,” Rodriguez said. “Maybe they’ll stop and say, “I shouldn’t have that fifth or sixth or seventh shot; maybe I shouldn’t play beer pong.

“I think people can change and do change, if you give them the tools and information they need.”

CU Chancellor Bud Peterson also braved the drizzly morning to stand with students and help plant memorial flags.

He said CU, which has drawn national attention for its past rankings as a top "party school" by the Princeton Review, has made strides in educating students about the dangers of binge drinking.

"It's one of the big challenges we face," Peterson said. "I think we've tried to do a lot to address the issues. I think it has sunk in, but it requires a continuous vigilance."

Peterson said he hopes the flags will serve as a gentle reminder to passing students to make wise decisions.

Sharayah Possett, a 19-year-old freshman walking by the quad Friday morning on her way to class, said she took notice.

"I know that at orientation they talked a lot about Gordie," she said. "Their emphasis was more that, if you're going to (drink alcohol), do it responsibly.

"People drink; it's not realistic to say, 'Don't do it at all.'"

Freshman Kelsey Rini, 18, also stopped to look at the memorial.

"It's pretty powerful," she said.

Rini said she began to understand the power of alcohol and bad decisions recently when her boyfriend had too much to drink.

"We couldn't do anything to wake him up" for hours, she said. "I don't intend to ever drink like that. It's so easy to overdo it."

Deb Coffin, dean of students at CU, said she's glad people are getting the message.

"I'm so proud of these students and the work they're doing to try and prevent the loss of another student's life," she said. "We want every one of the freshmen who enter to graduate, and we never want to lose another Gordie Bailey."

GORD is partnering with university administrators to host several memorial and awareness events through Wednesday, including the public premiere of the documentary "Haze," which examines binge drinking among young adults in America.

Leslie Lanahan, the mother of Gordie Bailey, produced the film with her husband.

The documentary will be shown first at 6 p.m. and 8 p.m. Sunday, and then again at 7:15 p.m. Tuesday in the ATLAS technology hub in the center of CU's campus.

A public panel discussion about alcohol, featuring CU administrators and students, will be held at 7:15 p.m. Wednesday in the Glenn Miller Ballroom.

For more information about GORD, visit [www.gordcolorado.com](http://www.gordcolorado.com). For information about the Gordie Foundation, visit [www.gordie.org/home.aspx](http://www.gordie.org/home.aspx).



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