

VirginiaTech

magazine



We will prevail.
We are Virginia Tech.



“We will continue to invent the future through our blood and tears and through all our sadness.”

University Distinguished Professor Nikki Giovanni

JOHN MCCORMICK

by Virginia Tech President Charles W. Steger '69

On the morning of April 16, 2007, this campus experienced acts of horror so unspeakable and unimaginable that, even now, our minds cannot fully grasp them. The shooting tragedy that occurred has nonetheless irrevocably changed both our university and our nation.

Equally hard to imagine are the depths of profound and limitless sorrow felt by all members of the university community, particularly the families, friends, colleagues, and classmates of those who died here that day. They have lost sons, daughters, fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters, friends, classmates, and professors in a sudden and senseless act of horrific violence, and they must learn to live with agonizing absences that will never be filled.

As a part of the larger Hokie family, we grieve alongside them, our hearts filled with sadness and sympathy. But no matter how painful our memories, we must forget neither those lost innocents nor the loved ones they left behind. This issue of *Virginia Tech Magazine* is dedicated to the victims of April 16.

In the aftermath of such tragedy, it is difficult to determine when it will be time to move ahead and how we will do so. Yet even as I write, I see that our campus sidewalks are crowded with those who have come to mourn and those who are here to learn. Students and faculty are back in their classrooms and their studies are important because teaching and learning are at the heart of this university and will be the foundation of its recovery.

My hope is that we will all learn much in the days and

months ahead as we undertake an open, sincere, and thorough analysis of all that has happened. We must learn from our experience and share our findings with the world to benefit the national discourse sparked by this tragedy—dialogue about laws, policies, protocols, and privacy and other issues. I have confidence that our review, as well as the commissions formed by both Gov. Tim Kaine and President George W. Bush, will yield answers that will benefit both Virginia Tech and society at large.

How will we move ahead? By relying on the spirit that the world has seen so clearly in the weeks since the tragedy, a sense of family that is virtually unheard of on other large campuses, a tie that binds Hokies new and old, here in Blacksburg or around the globe. That intangible Hokie spirit holds us together and will help us to survive and, in time, surmount this terrible tragedy. In the shelter of that spirit, we have found solace in one another's company, and even in the dark days that have followed April 16, we have rallied around our shared need to heal and have taken our first tentative steps together on the road to recovery and our path toward the future.

We at Virginia Tech form a special family, one defined not by a single tragic event but by our storied past, a community not frozen in the present but poised to invent our future. The events of April 16 have changed us, to be sure, but they have not—and will not—set us back. Today, we are pressing ahead with a renewed commitment to the university, a deeper understanding of the quality and depth of its character, and a steadfast resolve to excel so that we may honor the memory of those we have lost.

We will prevail. We are Virginia Tech. □

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How best to memorialize the horrific events that took place on April 16, 2007? By showing the nation and the world what “Hokie spirit” really means.

Nowhere is this sentiment better expressed than in the comments made by internationally known poet and Professor of English Nikki Giovanni at the April 17 convocation memorializing the victims of the tragedy. After heartfelt and moving comments from several speakers—including President George W. Bush, Virginia Gov. Tim Kaine, and President Charles W. Steger—Giovanni took her place behind the podium at Cassell Coliseum for a final tribute. There was fire in her voice and in her eyes, and her closing remarks moved a nation: “We will prevail. We *will* prevail. We will *prevail*. We are Virginia Tech.”

Giovanni’s words were met with thundering applause and a standing ovation. And then, entirely unexpectedly, students, faculty, staff, alumni, and parents alike began chanting, “Let’s go, Hokies!” until their voices rang through the rafters of Cassell. That spontaneous outburst embodies the university’s indomitable will and strength of character.

Today, the university’s tagline, “Invent the future,” is more applicable than ever. Now that the name of our beloved university has found its way into the history books in the most macabre manner possible, Virginia Tech must move forward, keeping its Hokie spirit alive for the victims, survivors, and their families. This Memorial Issue of *Virginia Tech Magazine* remembers those who were lost to us on April 16; presents some of the overwhelming support given to the university from around the world; and showcases the fortitude, resolve, and courage of the Hokie Nation.

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Cover: VT ribbon logo by David Stanley '95, words excerpted from Convocation remarks by Nikki Giovanni (see page 25).



In memorium

Ross Alameddine

Virginia Tech University Studies sophomore Ross Alameddine recently declared a major in English and minors in French and business, fields that reflected his creativity and his computer knowledge.

He was the son of Lynnette Alameddine and Dr. Abdallah Alameddine and brother of Yvonne Alameddine. From Saugus, Mass., formerly of Melrose, Mass., Ross was a 2005 graduate of Austin Preparatory School.

Ross enjoyed computer games and played them competitively. He beta-tested well-known games and even sold online characters. Before coming to Virginia Tech, he worked as a home-computer repair specialist.

Whether between classes or on nice days, Ross enjoyed rollerblading. He adored movies and music, played piano, and sang at Austin. Ross's fondness for language and voicing strong opinions was manifested through active participation in the French and Debate clubs at Austin.

The above qualities developed on Ross's journey through college. English instructor Brent Stevens writes, "He talked about his life, his emotions, his deep insights. . . . He put himself out there in front of 35 people, most of whom he did not know, . . . helping us to understand what we were reading and viewing with his unique perspective. . . . Knowing Ross Alameddine . . . sustains the belief that we all need so desperately right now: that there is good in this world."

Ross always sought to make others laugh and enjoy life. "From our first few days together in class," writes English instructor Robert Canter, "I remember thinking, 'Here's a man who's going to make his children laugh. Here is a man who deserves the title 'beloved.' Here's a man who, just by being himself, makes you a better person.'"



Christopher James "Jamie" Bishop

Jamie Bishop, devoted son, gentle colleague, and generous friend, died at the age of 35 while teaching introductory German. Although his courses were legendarily rigorous, "Herr Bishop" was popular with students because he always gave them whatever individual attention they needed to succeed. Jamie was a fun-loving but no-nonsense man, easy-going but passionate about the environment, nature, art, and teaching.

Jamie joined the Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures as an instructor in 2005 and was also an instructor in the Faculty Development Institute.

He had a reputation as a techno guru and a passionate and gifted photographer. His art vibrantly captures the intensity with which he viewed the world and the beauty he found there. Jamie also designed book jacket covers and created multimedia science fiction art. He had planned to enter the B.F.A. program at Virginia Tech in fall 2007 to study graphic art.

Jamie hailed from the small town of Pine Mountain, Ga., and earned bachelor's and master's degrees at the University of Georgia. He interned at the Pentagon in Washington, D.C., and then spent many years abroad. As a Fulbright Scholar, Jamie studied at the Christian-Albrechts-Universität in Kiel, Germany, and also worked as a freelance translator, German tutor, and teacher of English in Heidelberg.

A man of keen wit with a contagious enthusiasm for life, Jamie was an avid hiker, film connoisseur, and devoted fan of the Atlanta Braves.

Jamie shared the conviction that studying foreign languages and cultures is not only a joy but also fundamental to learning about and understanding humanity.





Brian Roy Bluhm

Brian Roy Bluhm was born in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, on July 19, 1981. Brian graduated from secondary school at duPont Manual in Louisville, Ky., and earned his bachelor of science in civil engineering from Virginia Tech in December 2004.

After enrolling in the civil engineering master's degree program at Tech, Brian served as a teacher's assistant and focused on water resources, with sustainability of water quantity using safe yield of a reservoir during a critical drought period as his main research area. He completed his degree in 2007.

Brian was a member of the Virginia Tech Alumni Association, American Society of Civil Engineers, and the Baptist Collegiate Ministries, among other organizations. His thirst for knowledge was endless and his interests wide-ranging, among them music, history, nature, and animals. His first

love was for God, which he exemplified through his kindness, warm smile, memorable laugh, and friendliness, and he loved his family and friends.

Growing up, Brian was passionate about sports, particularly baseball, and his favorite team was the Detroit Tigers. He also loved Virginia Tech sports, especially football and basketball. He showed up for games in Virginia

Tech colors to show his support.

Brian, who had passed the first section of his Professional Engineer exam, had recently accepted a position in the engineering firm Hatch Mott MacDonald in Hunt Valley, Md.

Brian would want to be remembered for his love of God, family, and friends, the Detroit Tigers, and Virginia Tech. He loved life and lived it to the fullest.



Ryan Christopher Clark

Ryan Christopher Clark, age 22, was born in Landstuhl, West Germany, on May 29, 1984, to Letitie and Stanley Clark.

He grew up in Martinez, Ga., and graduated from Lakeside High School in May 2002.

Ryan, who became interested in music when he was in the sixth grade, was a member of the Lakeside Marching Band and the Boy Scouts of America. He was active in many service organizations, including Communities in Schools of Augusta/Richmond County Teen Health Corps and Golden Harvest Food Bank. He was also a counselor and then the musical director at Camp Big Heart, where he spent two weeks every summer for the past eight years working with mentally impaired children.

At Virginia Tech, Ryan was a member of the Class of 2007 and was scheduled to receive his bachelor of science with a triple major in psychology, biology, and English at the 2007 Commencement. He planned to pursue a Ph.D. in neuroscience and wanted to work with the mentally impaired.

During his time as a Virginia Tech student, he was a distinguished campus leader. He played the baritone in the Marching Virginians and was a resident advisor in West Ambler Johnston Hall. He also was an advisor in the Imaginarium programming resource center and worked at West End Market.

Known to his friends as "Stack," Ryan leaves memories that will be forever cherished in the hearts of his immediate and extended family, band mates, residents of Ambler Johnston Hall, colleagues, and friends.





Austin Michelle Cloyd

Austin Michelle Cloyd lived life boldly, seeking new experiences and embracing those she felt passionate about. She lived her life with purpose, knowing what she wanted to accomplish and how to get there.

Born in Charlotte, N.C., to Bryan and Renee Cloyd, Austin grew up in three university towns before moving to Blacksburg. She graduated with honors from Blacksburg High School in June 2006.



Austin traveled the world with her family and was interested in politics and international and environmental issues. A double major in international studies and French at Virginia Tech, she took advantage of every learning opportunity. She was in the Honors Program, an officer

in the International Relations Organization, and an active participant in several model United Nations conferences.

A tall girl with flaming red hair and a bright smile, Austin played basketball throughout secondary school. She worked four summers with Appalachia Service Project to help make homes in rural Appalachia warmer, safer, and drier. She loved children and worked with them as a babysitter, a day-camp counselor for Fellowship of Christian Athletes, a group leader for the Champaign-Urbana Service Project, and a swimming instructor at Tech's McComas Hall. She enjoyed reading, scuba diving, music, concerts, college basketball games, travel, and adventures with friends.

Austin had a brilliant mind, a compassionate heart, and an iron will. She loved her brother, her parents, and her entire family. She not only wanted to help others, she did. Her favorite quote captures much of her outlook on life: "No one can do everything, but everyone can do something. And if everyone does something, then together we can change the world."

Jocelyne Couture-Nowak

Jocelyne Couture-Nowak, beloved mother and wife and a member of the Blacksburg community since 2001, was engaged in her passion, teaching Intermediate French at Virginia Tech, when she was killed. Jocelyne was born in Montreal, Canada, in 1958 and lived both in Quebec and Nova Scotia before moving to Blacksburg.

Family, friends, students, and colleagues remember Jocelyn's community spirit, love of nature, and dedication to the preservation of her francophone heritage. She would approach anyone she heard speaking French to welcome him or her to the local francophone community.

Before moving to Virginia, Ms. Couture-Nowak was instrumental in the development of the École Acadienne de Truro, Nova Scotia, which opened in 1997 and ensures access of francophone families to a safe school environment and French language education.

Jocelyne also taught at the Nova Scotia Agricultural College in Truro, in the 1990s, moving to Blacksburg when her husband was appointed head of the Department of Horticulture at Virginia Tech.

Jocelyne's brutal death contrasts sharply with her peaceful life, filled with family hikes in the bucolic countryside of her homes in the forests of Nova Scotia and Southwest Virginia, her flower-filled home gardens, her congenial gatherings of friends and students, and her cherished family. She died in the school setting that had been the touchstone of her life.

Jocelyne's *joie de vivre* touched all who encountered her. An unusual blend of energy and grace, she has been described as "effervescent" and a "vivacious swirl of life force." She also brought joy by living joy.

May that spirit, her spirit, be lived by those who remember her so.





Dr. Kevin P. Granata

Dr. Kevin Granata, a professor in the Department of Engineering Science and Mechanics (ESM), was known by friends and colleagues as a man who was passionate — first and foremost about his wife, Linda, and their children, Eric, Alex, and Ellen, and also about his work as an educator and researcher.



“Professor Granata distinguished himself by making many outstanding scholarly contributions,” said ESM Department Head Dr. Ishwar Puri. “He has been hailed by experts in the field of biomechanics as one of the top five researchers in the nation for his studies of movement dynamics in cerebral palsy.”

Born in Toledo, Ohio, in 1961, Kevin completed undergraduate degrees in electrical engineering and physics at Ohio State University (OSU) and a master’s degree in physics at Purdue University, where he met Linda. He returned to OSU to earn a Ph.D. in biomedical engineering.

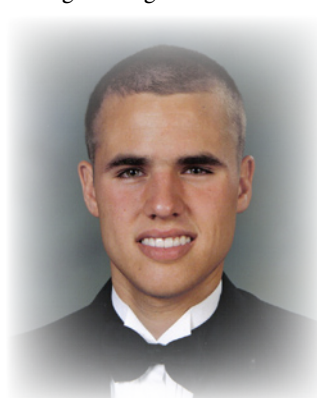
In 1997, Dr. Granata was recruited by the Department of Orthopaedic Surgery at the University of Virginia to direct research in the Motion Analysis and Motor Performance Laboratory. After coming to Virginia Tech in 2003, he established the Musculoskeletal Biomechanics Laboratory, a top-flight research facility he co-directed with Dr. Michael Madigan of ESM.

“Kevin was a visionary scientist who truly believed in the possibilities of changing the world through theoretical and empirical research,” said Dr. Thurmon Lockhart of the Grado Department of Industrial and Systems Engineering. “As a friend, he was caring and pure of heart. He gave me guidance about living a simple life. He was my friend, my colleague, and my mentor, and he will be truly missed.”

Matthew Gwaltney

Matthew Gwaltney, a second-year master’s student in the Charles E. Via Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering, wanted to improve awareness and education about environmental issues to encourage people to be proactive in protecting the environment and improving the quality of life for everyone.

In 2005, Matthew earned his bachelor’s degree, magna cum laude, from Virginia Tech in civil engineering, with a concentration in environmental and water resources engineering. As a graduate student, he taught civil engineering labs and was conducting research on storm-water management.



Matthew was born Dec. 11, 1982, to Karen P. and G. Gregory Gwaltney Jr. He was a 2001 graduate of Thomas Dale High School in Chester, Va. Among his high school awards and recognitions were memberships in the National Honor Society and the Spanish Honor Society. Continuing his academic achievements at Virginia Tech, he was inducted into Chi Epsilon, the civil engineering undergraduate honor society; Tau Beta Pi, the engineering honor society; the National Society of Collegiate Scholars; Phi Eta Sigma; Golden Key International Honor Society; and Phi Kappa Phi, a university-wide honor society.

Passionate about sports, Matthew was a master of sports statistics and trivia. He was a devoted Hokies fan and enjoyed all ACC sporting events. The Atlanta Braves, Chicago White Sox, and Chicago Bulls led his list of favorite professional teams. At Thomas Dale, Matthew was an avid, dedicated basketball and baseball team member. At Virginia Tech, he was often found in the gymnasium involved in a pick-up basketball game.

Matthew had many lasting friends who have remembered him as honest, dedicated, generous, and intelligent ... a real mentor and role model.



Caitlin Millar Hammaren

Caitlin Millar Hammaren had a way of making others feel as if they were her best friend. Her smile was contagious and her eyes sparkled under any circumstances.

Born on May 4, 1987, and from Westtown, N.Y., Caitlin was president of the Minisink Valley High School choir

and a member of the National Honor Society. For years, she served food at the Pulaski fire company's annual pancake breakfast.

At Virginia Tech, where Caitlin was a sophomore double majoring in international studies and French, she continued caring about and helping people. She was events chair for her sorority, Kappa Kappa Gamma,

and was one of their top fundraisers in the Relay for Life. She was also a resident advisor in the Residential Leadership Community. Her passion for that role was so strong that she took care of each of her residents as if they were her own children. As a result, she was inducted into the National Residence Hall Honorary, an organization that recognizes only the top 1 percent of residence hall leaders.

Caitlin dedicated her time outside her studies to many activities close to her heart, among them riding horses, singing, and playing the violin.

She will be missed by all who knew her.



Jeremy Michael Herbstritt

Jeremy Michael Herbstritt loved to hike, kayak, bike, ski, and work on the family farm. A phenomenal friend, brother, and son and a dedicated teacher, he was born on Nov. 6, 1979, and grew up on the Herbstritt farm in Bellefonte, Pa.

Jeremy graduated from Bellefonte Area High School and received a bachelor of science in biochemistry and molecular biology at Pennsylvania State University. He returned to Penn State to earn a B.S. in civil engineering, with honors, in 2006.

He then enrolled as a graduate student in civil engineering at Virginia Tech, where he was a teaching assistant and recipient of the Sussman Scholarship for summer 2007.

Jeremy worked for the Guided Path Dairy Farm in Bellefonte and for the Centre County, Pa., Extension office, where he collected mosquitoes to be tested for the West Nile virus. He is credited with discovering the first West Nile virus-infected mosquito in Centre County.

While growing up, Jeremy was involved in the Cub Scouts and Boy Scouts. He was a member of the Centre County 4-H Gold Bullets Club; Centre County Sheep Club; Centre County Beef Club; and the Knights of Columbus, Council 1314.

An avid runner, he competed in the Pocono and Steamtown marathons and participated for three consecutive years in the Tussey Mountainback 50-mile relay. He was helping his sister, Jennifer, train for the Boston Marathon.

Jeremy will forever be loved and missed by all and his amazing life will never be forgotten. A memorial 5K will be run annually by his friends and family so that his compassionate heart and passion for life will live on.





Rachael Elizabeth Hill

Rachael Elizabeth Hill of Glen Allen, Va., loved to read, especially novels and the Bible. An accomplished classical pianist, she had studied piano since the age of six.

Although Rachael had just started college as an undergraduate in fall 2006, she already knew she wanted to earn a Ph.D. in biochemistry, specializing in nanotechnology.

The daughter of Allen and Tammy Hill, she was a 2006 graduate of Grove Avenue Christian School in Richmond, Va. The consensus of her classmates and other people who knew her well is that it is difficult to capture the beauty, intelligence, poise, leadership, and other wonderful traits that Rachael possessed.

She enjoyed classic movies, playing volleyball, shopping for shoes, and hanging out with her parents.

Rachael was perpetually prepared. One of her beloved scriptures is Song of Solomon 8:5: "Who is this coming up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved?" She saw

herself as the one coming out of the wilderness and needing to lean on her Savior more and more. Her personal goal was to glorify God in all she did through her Lord Jesus Christ.

Rachael's high school administrator writes, "The world has lost one of its brightest prospects, but the Lord is glorified through the Daughter of the King that she is, the life that she lived, and the impact

Rachael had on others in the name of Jesus."

Her senior yearbook quote from C.S. Lewis sums up best what her family feels she would say at this time: "God, who foresaw your tribulation, has specially armed you to go through it, not without pain but without stain."



Emily Jane Hilscher

Emily Jane Hilscher was the beloved daughter of Eric and Elizabeth Hilscher, best friend and sister of Erica, and granddaughter of Gilman and Mary Carlson and Carl and Merle Hilscher.

She graduated from Rappahannock County High School as a member of the Class of 2006. Emily was a skilled horsewoman, animal lover, enthusiastic cook, and imaginative artisan. She was always wise beyond her years and insisted on fairness in everything. She wanted people to be happy, and she was eternally trying to save someone or something.

Emily had a passion for horses, and in the fall of 2006, she began what was to be an eight-year journey at Virginia Tech, which would have culminated with her becoming a veterinarian and then working in an equine practice. She became a member of the Virginia Tech equestrian team in spring 2007.

Emily was a member of the Intercollegiate Horse Shows Association and competed successfully in her first show at Virginia Intermont College on Feb. 12, 2007. She was scheduled to compete in her second show on April 21.

According to her coach, "Emily was just entering her intercollegiate riding career. She showed great promise and had a perfect attitude that would have made her a very successful intercollegiate rider. Her strong work ethic and determination were always displayed as she spent long hours at equestrian club events, always with a smile on her face."





Jarrett Lee Lane

Jarrett Lee Lane was fun loving and full of spirit. He had a caring heart and was a friend to everyone he met, both in his hometown and at Virginia Tech, where he was a senior in civil engineering.



Born in Giles County, Va., on March 28, 1985, Jarrett was raised in Narrows, Va., by his mother, Tracey Lane, and always excelled in sports and academics. He graduated from Narrows High School with a 4.0 grade point average; participated in football, basketball, tennis, and track; played in the band; and participated in clubs and community organizations.

He became the school's top tennis player and earned all-district honors in football, basketball, and track. He was the valedictorian of his graduating class and a graduate of the Southwest Virginia Governor's School.

Jarrett realized a long-time goal when he became a Hokie in fall 2003. While at Virginia Tech, he played intramural sports and became a member of the Campus Crusade for Christ. He interned for the Site and Infrastructure Development Department in Virginia Tech Facilities for nearly two years. As a senior, he was awarded The Stanley and Frances Cohen Scholarship, a civil engineering scholarship.

Jarrett would have graduated from Virginia Tech in the 2007 Commencement. He had been accepted at the University of Florida's Coastal Engineering Graduate Program.

Jarrett took great pride in being a Hokie and enjoyed his experiences at Virginia Tech. He often traveled home on weekends, visiting family and friends, attending First Baptist Church, and playing sports with friends.

Jarrett recognized the importance of being a serious student but, even more so, the importance of living life to its fullest.

Matthew Joseph La Porte

Matthew J. La Porte, a sophomore majoring in political science, loved playing music and relished the various challenges he faced as a member of the Virginia Tech Corps of Cadets.

Born on Nov. 20, 1986, Matt was the son of Joseph and Barbara La Porte of Dumont, N.J. He had one sister, Priscilla.

Matt graduated from Carson Long Military Institute in New Bloomfield, Pa., where he excelled in academics and leadership and served as drum major of the cadet band.

At Virginia Tech, he was a member of the corps of cadets and played tenor drum for the Regimental Band, the Highty-Tighties. His musical expertise led to his selection as a member of the Southern Colonels, the cadet jazz band. He was also a Fire Team leader in his company.

Matt was attending college on an Air Force ROTC scholarship and was working to earn a commission in the United States Air Force. His goal was to be an intelligence officer once on active duty.

He was a bright student, and he consistently scored high marks on his physical fitness tests; peers admired his strength and stamina. He demonstrated his enthusiasm for physical fitness by joining the Air Force Special Operations Preparation Team and participating in a rigorous physical training regimen.

Considerate and mature, Matt was a cadet with unlimited potential who loved a challenge. He was working hard to prepare for Air Force ROTC summer field training, a 28-day leadership evaluation.

His family and friends, as well as the faculty and staff at both Carson Long and Virginia Tech, mourn his passing.





Henry J. Lee (Henh Ly)

Henry J. Lee (Henh Ly) was always the one to repair his family's computers, which turned out to be good preparation for becoming a computer engineering major at Virginia Tech. Henry was the ninth of 10 children of Song Ly and Mui Lenh, who moved from Vietnam to Roanoke, Va., in 1994.



An academic achiever, Henry graduated from William Fleming High School's International Baccalaureate Program as class salutatorian with a 4.47

grade point average. He was also a member of the French and Beta clubs. At Virginia Tech, he was a dean's list student even as a freshman.

Henry's brother, Manh, also attends Virginia Tech, and his sister, Chi, has completed her studies in accounting and received her degree during the 2007 Commencement ceremonies.

Henry was a creative person, interested in origami and photography. Additionally, he liked to watch movies and hang out with his friends. He will always be fondly remembered by his classmates and teachers as the young man with an open smile and zany personality. His Virginia Tech classmate Nathan Spady called Henry "an extremely bubbly guy, always ready to go."

"Henry loved his family and was a good son," writes a family friend. One of his proudest moments was becoming an American citizen in May 2006. Although the Ly family will forever miss their treasured child, they find some comfort knowing that Henry died a heroic death while trying to help his teacher block their classroom door.

Dr. Liviu Librescu

The revelation that Dr. Liviu Librescu blocked the door of his classroom in Norris Hall on the morning of April 16 so that his students could escape through the windows came as no surprise to his family, friends, and colleagues. The renowned aeronautical engineering educator and researcher had demonstrated profound courage throughout the 76 years of his life.

As a child in Romania during World War II, Liviu was confined to a Jewish ghetto, while his father was sent to a forced labor camp. After surviving the Holocaust, Liviu moved forward with stalwart determination to become an engineer.

During the rise of the Communist Party in Romania in the 1960s, Liviu completed his Ph.D. at the Academy of Science of Romania and began to achieve academic prominence. When he and his wife wanted to leave Romania for Israel, it took them three years and the help of the Israeli government to obtain visas.

Liviu taught at Tel-Aviv University until he spent a year on sabbatical at Virginia Tech. The family decided to settle in Blacksburg in 1985, and Dr. Librescu became one of the university's—and the world's—most respected educators and researchers in the field of aeronautical engineering.

Dr. Librescu is survived by his wife, Marlana, and his sons, Joseph and Arieh, who reside in Israel. During his funeral in Israel, Marlana was presented with the Grand Cross of Romania, the nation's highest civilian honor, in honor of her husband's "scientific achievements and heroism."





Dr. G.V. Loganathan

The high regard and fondness that students in the Charles E. Via Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering feel for Dr. G.V. Loganathan is a reflection of the fact that they were his top priority. Phrases such as “the best professor I ever had,” “the kindest person I’ve ever met,” and “incredibly wise and gentle” are common among the tributes paid to Dr. Loganathan by undergraduate and graduate students.

Born in the state of Tamil Nadu, India, in 1954, G.V.

journeyed to the U.S. for graduate studies at Purdue University, where he earned his Ph.D. in civil engineering. In December 1981, he joined the faculty of Virginia Tech and embarked on a remarkable career as one of the university’s most accomplished educators and one of the nation’s most respected researchers in the fields of hydrology and water resources systems.

Virginia Tech recognized Dr. Loganathan’s exceptional devotion to students by presenting him with virtually every teaching honor offered by the university, including the 2006 W.E. Wine Award for Excellence in Teaching.

“Professor Loganathan was an exemplary educator who cared greatly for his students and their well-being,” said Dr. William R. Knocke, head of the Via department. “He was a kind soul, pure in heart, who taught us through his words and actions how to answer the calling to be a teacher, a mentor, and a beloved friend.”

Dr. Loganathan is survived by his wife, Usha, and his daughters, Uma and Abhi.

Partahi M. “Mora” Lumbantoruan

Partahi M. “Mora” Lumbantoruan, a Ph. D. student in civil engineering, was calm, caring, and talented and was always ready to help others.

A native of Indonesia, he was born on April 26, 1972, and earned his B.S. and master’s degrees in civil engineering at Parahyangan Catholic University.

Mora came to America in 2004 to earn his doctorate in civil engineering at Virginia Tech and joined the Indonesian community. He enjoyed football games, grilling saté for the international street fair, taking road trips, and engaging in spiritual and intellectual discussions. Quiet and shy, he was quick to join in lively political discussions, especially those relating to Indonesian political affairs.

Mora’s smile was contagious and he radiated positive energy that attracted and cemented friendships. He loved Virginia Tech and devoted himself to Tech traditions and the football team.

Mora was admired for his patience, wisdom, and compassion for others. He could put a smile on the faces of stressed friends and help them not to worry about little things. He faced each day with a positive attitude; put others’ needs before his own; and was the son, grandson, nephew, cousin, uncle, husband, and father everyone should have.

As a true hero, Mora spent his final moments on earth sacrificing his life to save that of another. If he were here today, he would ask us to keep our chins up and to smile. He would want us to gain strength from this tragedy and to live each day to the fullest.

“Rest in peace my brother ... you will not be forgotten.”





Lauren Ashley McCain

Lauren Ashley McCain, a tribal member of the Choctaw Nation, was a freshman from Hampton, Va., majoring in international studies. Calling Virginia Tech “almost heaven,” she loved the entire campus community.



Lauren strived for excellence in her studies, but as much as she cared about learning, she cared about people more. She had a quirky sense of humor and a love of life that she shared with everyone. Her smile was bright and cheered those around her.

She had many interests and was active in several organizations.

Lauren combined her love of music with her daily workouts and runs. She was involved in intramural soccer and women’s flag football and loved the German language and culture.

Active in Campus Crusade for Christ, New Life Christian Fellowship, and Bridges International Ministries, Lauren cared deeply about the international community and participated in campus ministries that reached out to international students. She spoke often of her desire to travel, to study abroad, and to one day live and work in another country and share her love of Christ. She viewed everyone as uniquely valuable, and purposefully invested herself in those she met.

Lauren loved God and had faith that her savior Jesus Christ had placed her at Virginia Tech with a mission and a purpose: to touch those she met with His love and to glorify Him. Her Christian faith is revealed in her own testimony: “I don’t have to argue religion, philosophy, or historical evidence because I *know Him*. He is just as real, if not more so, as my earthly father.”

Daniel Patrick O’Neil

A scientist and an artist, Daniel Patrick O’Neil of Lincoln, R.I., was working on a master’s degree in environmental engineering.

Daniel earned a B.S. in civil engineering from Lafayette College, discovering his interest in the environment as an EXCEL Scholar. His 2005 studies of storm-water runoff and the effects of urban development on flooding led to his decision to pursue hydrology as a career. He worked as a junior engineer at Pare Engineering in Lincoln during the summer and over Christmas break 2006-07. At Virginia Tech, he worked as a teaching assistant in civil and environmental engineering.

Daniel loved music, theater, and politics and was active in drama productions and variety shows. At Lincoln High School, he competed on the cross-country and track teams and played music with his friends.

At Lafayette, he continued his involvement in art and sports, was vice president of the Arts Society, and was a member of the Marquis Players acting group. He lived in the Arts Houses, where he was an advisor and played guitar and piano, and he performed at block parties and reunions.

Daniel also liked running, Red Sox baseball, Hokie football and basketball, backpacking, biking, skateboarding, and traveling. He spent a semester in Brussels, Belgium, studying engineering, art history, languages, and culture and recently returned to visit his host family. He traveled to most Western European countries and planned to live in Dublin, Ireland, after graduation.

Daniel was exceedingly loyal to his friends and family, and his friends plan to produce a CD of his music as a fundraiser. Twenty-five of his songs can be heard at www.residenthippy.com/music.htm.





Juan Ramón Ortiz-Ortiz

Juan Ramón Ortiz-Ortiz was born on Feb. 4, 1981, in San Juan, Puerto Rico, to Juan Ramón and Brunilda Ortiz.

Juan graduated from the Colegio Nuestra Señora de Belén, in Guaynabo, Puerto Rico, where he was a member of the basketball, baseball, and track and field teams and the National Honor Society and participated in the Presidential Classroom of America.

In 2005, Juan completed undergraduate studies in civil engineering at the Polytechnic University of Puerto Rico,

where he was chapter president of the American Society of Civil Engineers and a member of numerous professional organizations. He was also part of the University Honor Board and a member of the Middle States Association for Colleges and Schools Curriculum Committee for the Polytechnic University of Puerto Rico.

Juan and his wife, Liselle, both started the master's program in civil engineering at Virginia Tech

in August 2006. He was a research and teaching assistant, and Professor G.V. Loganathan was his mentor.

Juan loved music and played the timbales for a family music group and also for a choir in college. His love for God also filled his life. He was involved in several Catholic activities throughout his school years.

Juan's family remembers him for his perseverance; dedication; patience; responsibility; and, most importantly, his smile. His life was characterized by his love for his family and his desire to become a better person each day. He lived his life with great intensity and changed the lives of everyone he met, filling them with love and happiness. He will be remembered forever for his passion for civil engineering, family, and life.



Minal Hiralal Panchal

Throughout her life, Minal Hiralal Panchal strengthened her family with her childlike enthusiasm and infectious laughter. She is remembered for her kindness, her lifelong passion for architecture and the built environment, and her ability to focus on her goals and to dedicate herself to challenges.

Minal was born in Borivali in Mumbai, India, on July 17, 1980. Called "Minu" by her family, she developed a talent for watercolor painting, swam, wrote poetry, read modern fiction, and enjoyed soft rock and Indian Western fusion music.

Minal's fascination with complex and beautifully resolved structural solutions guided her academic career. In India, she was ranked in the top 10 of the state-level architecture entrance test and was ranked first at Rizvi College of Architecture in Mumbai, India, for her final-year design solution.

After graduating from Rizvi, Minal worked for two architects in Mumbai and then enrolled in fall 2006 in the M.S. program in architecture in Virginia Tech's School of Architecture + Design, where she focused on energy-efficient design solutions and advanced building structures. She also worked for VT STARS (Summer Training Academy for Rising Students).

At Virginia Tech, Minal connected with countless people due to her kind, uncomplicated nature. Her self-respect and ability to love radiated to the Virginia Tech community. Her friends and family carry her spirit with them.

"There are some people who need a year to be noticed, some who need a big achievement, and some conquer the world with power and fame," says a Virginia Tech friend. "There are others who change the world by simply being themselves, offering peace and happiness with their smiles—Minal, you were one of those."





Daniel Alejandro Perez

Daniel Perez, age 21, was a junior majoring in international studies. He was the son of Betty Cueva of Woodbridge, Va., and Flavio Perez of Peru.

Daniel left Peru with his mother and sister in 2000. In high school, he was active in sports and was a member of the National Honor Society. He graduated from C.D. Hylton High School with honors and attended two community colleges before enrolling in Virginia Tech in fall 2006.

Daniel could accomplish anything he put his mind to. He had a beautiful smile and was a great friend and a wonderful brother and son. He and his sister cared about their parents and wanted to see them happy. Daniel also enjoyed lavishing attention on his Bassett hound, Shiloh, and he displayed Shiloh's photo on his personal profile in an online social chat room.

He dreamed of being heard and making peace in the world and believed that God put everyone here to make a difference in someone's life. He loved to see his friends happy, and many of them viewed him as a role model. They said they were honored to have been able to call him "friend."

Daniel was nicknamed "Korki" because he acted goofy and did the most unexpected things. However, he always tried to make his parents and sister proud of him.

Wanting to bring people together and make the world peaceful led Daniel to choose to work in international services. He made his voice heard and encouraged the people around him to be better individuals. One of his friends says, "He was an amazing friend. I will never forget that."



Erin Nicole Peterson

Erin Nicole Peterson was born Aug. 17, 1988, in Fairfax, Va., to Celeste and Grafton Peterson. An only child, Erin was a dedicated "daddy's girl" whose parents considered her their "angel—their dewdrop from heaven."

Erin's early learning took place at Virginia's Appletree Private School and Merritt Academy. She graduated in 2006 from Westfield High School in Chantilly, Va., where she was a member of the National Honor Society. She excelled in the classroom and exhibited great skill on the basketball court, serving as team captain her senior year.

Last summer, after being nominated by her high school principal, Erin worked as an intern with Rolls-Royce North America Inc. At the company's invitation, she was to have returned as an intern this year.

Erin's personality was a wonderful blend of warmth and magnetism anchored by a sound moral compass. She lived a life that was filled with joy, which she freely shared with others. In return, she attracted the admiration and respect of her peers and the complete adoration of her family.

A certified homebody, Erin loved watching movies and staying in with her family. She adored her maternal great-grandmother and had profound respect for her parents, whom she called every night. Faithful and spiritual, she firmly believed in the power of prayer.

Erin entered Virginia Tech in fall 2006, majoring in international studies. She had recently been elected co-president of EMPOWER, an organization dedicated to building self-esteem and confidence in young minority girls.

While Erin's passing has left a gaping hole in the hearts of her family and friends, her spirit and her legacy of excellence, optimism, leadership, and love will live forever.

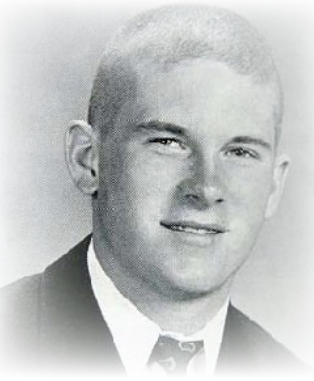




Michael Pohle Jr.

Michael Pohle Jr., born in Newark, N.J., on Oct. 15, 1983, maintained a curiosity about everything around him and constantly ventured out to learn new things.

During Mike's early school years, he endured a painful experience—ridicule by others due to speech development issues—which he overcame and used to help shape himself into a wonderful and caring person.



Involved in various activities, Mike learned to play music, earned his black belt in karate, and participated in team sports. He played football and lacrosse at Hunterdon Central Regional High School in Flemington, N.J., and played lacrosse at Virginia Tech. In his honor, the team wore his initials on their helmets

when they played in the SouthEastern Lacrosse Conference tournaments in late April.

Mike would do anything for his teammates and his friends. He never lost his love for learning, either in the classroom or in life. He was set to graduate with a B.S. in biology at the 2007 Commencement.

Everyone who knew Mike will remember him for always helping people. He befriended those who felt they did not fit in or who were lost in the crowd with no one to turn to. It was instinctive for Mike to help; it was his calling.

That inner desire to learn as much as possible, be part of a team, and help as many people as he could are some of the key reasons he chose Virginia Tech. Whether it was his family, friends, classmates, teammates, the Phillies, the Buccaneers, or his beloved Hokies, Mike always looked out for them, as he still does.

That is how he would want to be remembered.

Julia Kathleen Pryde

A dedicated environmentalist, Julia Kathleen Pryde of Middletown, N.J., chose biological systems engineering for both her 2006 B.S. and her master's degree. It was natural for her to care deeply for others, as evidenced by her trip to Ecuador and Peru to conduct research on water purity to help create a more sustainable form of agriculture that would help the poor.

She had planned to pursue a doctorate degree, become a professor, teach in college, and conduct research with a focus on creating pure water and sustainable agriculture in the Andes and Africa.

Julia, born on Sept. 7, 1983, was an avid swimmer, enjoyed soccer and softball, and had a great interest in music. A certified wild-land firefighter, she worked with the Student Conservation Association and was a member of a firefighting team deployed to fight fires in Arizona in 2005.



Julia conducted a restoration project with the Nature Conservancy of New Jersey and performed home assessments and GPS data collection for fire evaluation at the Turtle Mountain Indian Reservation in North Dakota.

Julie was an officer of SEEDS (Seek Education, Explore, DiScover), an active supporter of those who resist the mountain-top-removal coal mining in Appalachia, and an active member of the American Society of Agricultural and Biological Engineers.

Warm and accepting, Julia was open to diverse people, ideas, circumstances, and challenges. She was kind, generous, and brave. She embraced challenges, whether academic, social, ethical, physical, economic, or spiritual, all with enthusiasm, and she placed herself on a path of new trials, always in pursuit of a better world and a better self.



Mary Karen Read

Mary Karen Read, a freshman majoring in interdisciplinary studies, was born on Jan. 30, 1988, in Seoul, South Korea. After living in several states, she settled in Annandale, Va.

At Annandale High School, she completed the International Baccalaureate Program; was a member of the National, French, and Tri-M Band honor societies; was president of the high school band; and was a clarinet section leader. She was also a member of Annandale's Homecoming Court, played lacrosse, and participated in winter color guard.

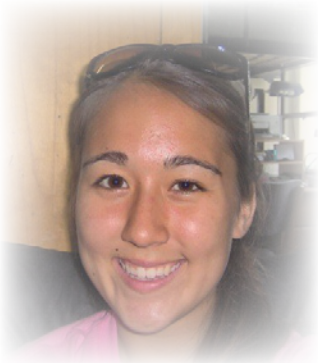
Mary was contemplating a career in elementary education. At Virginia Tech, she was a member of the concert band and Campus Crusade for Christ and had applied to be a Bible study leader. Her deep faith was evident in every aspect of her life.

Although she initially found the size of Virginia Tech daunting, Mary was working hard to assimilate, spending time on campus with hometown friends, her roommate, and a growing number of new acquaintances. She had recently started working in a campus dining hall.

Mary loved spending time with her family and friends, especially on trips to the mountains, the beach, and the lake, and was happiest when helping others, especially

children. Renowned for her beautiful, constant smile and sweet personality, she relished her role of big sister to siblings Stephen (11), Patrick (4), Hannah (4), Brendan (2), and Colleen (10 months).

Mary is sadly missed by her father and stepmother, Pete and Cathy Read of Annandale; mother and stepfather, Yon Son Yi Zhang and Dr. Zhang of Palisades Park, N.J.; and her aunts, uncles, and cousins.



Reema Joseph Samaha

Reema Joseph Samaha was the youngest child of Joseph and Mona Samaha.

A lifelong resident of Centreville, Va., she embraced her Lebanese heritage, staying active in the Melkite Greek Catholic Church and traveling to the Middle East, where she studied languages and cultures.

Reema had an exceptionally warm and close relationship with her parents and adored her brother, Omar, and her sister, Randa, with whom she shared friends, travels, and visits. She also loved spending time with her grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins.

Reema maintained lifelong friendships with diverse people who were drawn to her openness, cheerfulness, creativity, and wit. As a child, she enjoyed performing in comical video productions with neighborhood friends, was named to three youth soccer all-star teams, and began studying Tae Kwon Do.

As Reema matured, she pursued her passions for dance and theater. She performed on the Westfield High School dance team, was a Cappies critics' choice as the featured dancer in Westfield's award-winning production of "Fiddler on the Roof," and belly-danced her way to victory in the school's talent show. She was a member of Westfield's Improvisation Group, earned rave reviews for her lead performance in "Arsenic and Old Lace," and appeared in "Oklahoma." At Virginia Tech, she was a member of the Contemporary Dance Ensemble, the Hill and Veil Middle Eastern Dance Group, and the Cedars of Lebanon Club.

Reema blended her joy of life with seriousness of mind, graduating summa cum laude from Westfield, where she was a member of the National, French, and Science honor societies, and earning a 4.0 GPA at Virginia Tech, where she intended to major in urban planning.





Waleed Shaalan

Waleed Shaalan, age 32, came to Virginia Tech in August 2006 as an international doctoral student in engineering. Originally from Zagazig, Egypt, he had no family members in the United States, yet he quickly became an essential member of the Blacksburg Muslim community.

Among those mourning his death are his two roommates, Fahad Pasha and Irfan Waseem, who saw him as a loving older brother, cook, and academic and spiritual mentor.

Waleed began his Ph.D. program in Egypt, but when Virginia Tech offered him an assistantship, he decided to continue his studies in Blacksburg. Following in the footsteps of his father, Waleed was a dedicated and passionate student of civil engineering.

Though he had a hectic schedule from juggling classes, research, and teaching-assistantship responsibilities, he always made time for the people around

him. He was known for his broad smile and the friendly wave with which he greeted everyone.

“Waleed was the simplest and nicest guy I ever knew. We would be studying for our exams and he would go buy a cake and make tea for us,” says Pasha.

Pasha was the last person to have spoken to Waleed. “He was studying for an exam the morning of the incident. It was about 4 a.m. when I last saw and spoke to him. We were talking about how amazing it would be when he brought his wife and son to Tech at the end of the summer. I could never have imagined that in six hours he’d be gone forever.”

Waleed Shaalan left behind Amira, his wife of 3 years, and his one-year-old son, Khaled.



Leslie Geraldine Sherman

Leslie Geraldine Sherman, a junior in the Virginia Tech Honors Program majoring in history and international relations, was an inspiring young woman who could “do it all” and excel.

Leslie loved photography, visiting historical sites and museums—particularly those relating to early American History—reading, running, and traveling throughout the United States (especially to Seattle) and around the world. She made trips to Argentina and Ecuador that she funded herself and had recently made trips with her mother to Jamaica and London. Her next area of study was to be Russia, where she was scheduled to spend the first summer semester in a six-week program.

In addition to superior academic achievements, Leslie felt a driving need to help those who were less fortunate, often volunteering her personal time and giving of herself. Since childhood, she had donated half of what she had to people in need. She was a student volunteer at a retirement home, a Special Olympics coach at West Potomac High School, a tutor, cherished daughter, devoted older sister, beloved granddaughter, admired cousin, loyal friend, and trusted master of her dog, Winnie.

Last fall, Leslie ran the Marine Corps Marathon in four hours and two minutes and was looking forward to running future marathons. She worked as a student supervisor in Virginia Tech’s West End Market.

Leslie wanted to continue serving the less fortunate by joining the Peace Corps upon graduation. She had then hoped to pursue a career with the U.S. Department of State.

She had immeasurable integrity, courage, and strength, and she was a gift to all who knew her.





Maxine “Max” Shelly Turner

Maxine “Max” Shelly Turner was an honors student from Vienna, Va., ready to graduate with a degree in chemical engineering. She was brilliant, beautiful, and talented and excelled at everything she committed herself to, including swing dancing, Tae Kwon Do, schoolwork, violin, and her favorite video game, *Zelda*.

She talked to herself while playing video games, stuck her tongue out for photographs, and sang aloud while doing homework with her headphones on. She often could be found in her pajamas and bunny slippers, sitting on the living room floor and watching cartoons, particularly *Spongebob*, while doing chemical engineering work. These endearing quirks are a large part of what made Max so loveable.

She was also motivated and ambitious. At Virginia Tech, she saw the need for a professional sorority for female engineers and helped found a chapter of Alpha Omega Epsilon, serving as chair of both community outreach and professional life.

She was also in the Hypatia class that encouraged the university to expand Hypatia—the Women in Engineering Learning Community—from a one-year to a two-year program, and she volunteered for the Relay for Life, the Big Event, and the animal shelter.

Max loved her family and was famous among her peers for actually talking to her parents practically every day—and enjoying it! She regaled her friends with tales of her younger brother, Anthony, and his many accomplishments.

Fiercely independent, she earned her own money and helped with all of her expenses.

Everyone who knew Max will miss her greatly, but sadder still is the fact that those who didn’t know her will never have the pleasure of doing so. She was an exceptional person.



Nicole Regina White

Nicole Regina White, the daughter of Mike and Tricia White, was born Aug. 23, 1986. A graduate of Smithfield High School, she had one brother, Evan.

A junior at Virginia Tech, Nicole was majoring in international studies with a minor in political science.

Nicole was a giving person who, even in high school, completed emergency medical training and served as a volunteer with the Smithfield, Va., Volunteer Rescue Squad. She was active in the YMCA and worked as a lifeguard as well as a swimming instructor. While at Virginia Tech, she was an active volunteer at both the local animal shelter and the battered women’s shelter.

Nicole loved her friends and her friends loved her. She was the type of person who would not judge a person by his or her outward appearance but looked at the person’s heart. She wanted to know people as they really were, not as they appeared.

While living in Smithfield, Nicole faithfully attended Nansemond River Baptist Church in Suffolk, Va., and worked in the outreach program, taking the message of the Gospel and Christ’s love to people in the local area.

“Her family wants everyone to know that Nicole loved the Lord, loved people, and loved working with children. They have suffered a tremendous loss,” says the Rev. Tim Piland, senior pastor of her church.



These brief biographies were prepared by or in conjunction with the families. For additional biographical information, go to www.vt.edu/tragedy.



JOSH ARMSTRONG

Convocation remarks

Zenobia Hikes

Welcome.

My name is Zenobia Hikes, vice president for student affairs.

We have come together today to remember the cherished and innocent members of our Virginia Tech family who were gunned down in a senseless act that has left us all reeling with excruciating grief.

As we share our sorrow, we collectively pay tribute to these young, gifted minds who came to Virginia Tech searching for knowledge and understanding, and to these dedicated, talented professors who sought to impart that knowledge and enhance that understanding. Today, the world shares our sorrow and pays tribute with us.

We particularly want the families and friends of those who died to know that you have our deepest, most heartfelt sympathy. We hope you know that we will do what we can to ease your pain, even as we deal with our own. Your loved ones were valued members of the Virginia Tech family and they can never be replaced, either in our hallways or in our hearts.

What happened here yesterday has reverberated not just throughout the Virginia Tech family but throughout all of higher education—indeed, throughout the world. This global tragedy is one we never imagined to see on our university campus. Because of it, we have lost not only these dear members of our Virginia Tech family, we have also lost the sense of peace that comes with learning.

The Virginia Tech family is one of camaraderie, respect,



JOSH ARMSTRONG

scholarship, pride, and spirit—standing together through the good times and the bad. What has happened to these beloved members of our family has brought us even closer together in shared grief and disbelief. With the help and support of each other and our brothers and sisters from around the world, and with the uplifting strength we gain from our collective loss, we will eventually recover. But we will never ever forget. □



ROANOKE TIMES

President Charles W. Steger

Today, our university community, indeed the entire nation and people from many other nations, come together to mourn and to grieve, all the while hoping that we will awaken from this horrible nightmare.

In the last day, I have expressed my horror and shock, but there are no words to truly express the depth of sadness that we all feel.

It is overwhelming, almost paralyzing, yet our hearts and our minds call us to come together, to share our individual attempts to comprehend the incomprehensible, to make sense of the senseless, and to find ways for our community to heal. And, slowly and painfully but inevitably, to begin to heal and to again move forward.

We are very grateful that we do not have to travel this path alone.

The expressions of sympathy and support that have poured in from all corners of our nation and from around the world have touched us, have helped us cope with this incredible tragedy, and have reaffirmed our basic belief in the goodness of people.

We want to thank all the members of local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies, especially Virginia Tech Police, Blacksburg Police, and Virginia State Police, and all emergency responders who rushed to our aid, who continue to monitor our campus, and who have the additional horror of investigating this catastrophe. We cannot thank them enough for their bravery and their assistance.

We are extremely grateful that you here in attendance

today have come to help us and to help each other. We are thankful for our students and their friends and families who have offered solace and comfort to one another.

In fact, the Student Government Association and the student body have organized a candlelight vigil that will take place on the Drillfield near the War Memorial at approximately 8 p.m.

As I have mentioned previously but want to emphasize, there is counseling available for all members of the university community. Counseling for students is available at the McComas Center and for faculty and staff at Squires in the Brush Mountain Room.

This afternoon, during this Convocation, we see further testimony that the events that occurred in our community yesterday had an impact not just on friends and families, but on millions and millions of people.

To help us mourn and to begin to heal, we have with us, of course, President George W. Bush and First Lady Laura Bush; Virginia Gov. Tim Kaine and First Lady Ann Holton; all of the Virginia members of the U.S. Congress; the Honorable Bill Bolling, lieutenant governor of Virginia; and Virginia Attorney General Bob McDonnell; members of the Virginia General Assembly, as well as members and former members of the Virginia Tech Board of Visitors. We also appreciate having with us members of the Blacksburg Town Council and other local officials.

We deeply appreciate their care, concern, and compassion. □



Governor Tim Kaine

What an amazing community this is. Mr. President and Mrs. Bush and to all who are part of this Virginia Tech community in this room, on this campus, worldwide today; it is a very bitter and sad day, and yet my wife, Anne, and I are very privileged to be here with you, and there is no where else in the world we would rather be than with you at this moment.

As Charlie mentioned, Anne and I had left on Sunday morning from Richmond to go on a two-week trade mission to Asia. One of the events is actually an event in India to spotlight a wonderful program of Virginia Tech. We had been in Tokyo in the hotel for about five hours and we were awakened with a call at about 1 a.m. to report the horrible tragedy on this campus, and we were stunned. Our first thought was that we need to get home—we need to be in Blacksburg with this community that we care so much about.

We had the experience of being up in the middle of the night and not being able to get home for about 10 hours. So we did what people all across the world had been doing in the last of couple of days. We sat there at first in our hotel room and then in a coffee shop and then in an airport waiting lounge with the television on watching to get news about what was happening on the campus and how the campus was handling this.

It was different being away from home, being halfway across the world, and seeing what was happening on this campus, and what you students were showing to the world. And even in the midst of the darkest day in the history of this campus, what you showed to the world yesterday, you students, was an amazing thing.

Again and again and again, in all these various news outlets, students were called forth to offer their thoughts and asked what they thought about their campus and how they were dealing with this tragedy. The grief was real and very raw and the questions were deep and troubling, but again the students came back to wearing the Virginia Tech sweatshirts, wearing the Virginia Tech caps, and the incredible community spirit and sense of unity here on this campus and how before it was about who was to blame or what could have been done differently, it was about how we take care of each other in this wonderful, wonderful community. How proud we were, even in the midst of a sad day, to see how well you represented yourselves and this university to a worldwide community.

There are deep emotions that are called forth by a tragedy as significant as this, grieving and sadness by the boatload. Anne and I have unashamedly shed tears about this and I know virtually all of you have as well. That is the thing we should be doing; we should be grieving. There are resources here on this campus and others who are on this campus to help you if you find the need for consolation, which is so important.

A second reaction that is a natural reaction is anger—anger at the gunman, anger at the circumstance. Asking, “What could have been done differently?”—that’s natural as well. One of the most powerful stories in the human history of stories is that great story central to Judaism, Islam, and Christianity—the story of Job from the Old Testament, afflicted with all kinds of tragedy in his family and health, and he was angry. He was angry with his



circumstances. He was angry at his Creator. He argued with God and he didn't lose his faith. It's okay to argue. It's okay to be angry. Those emotions are natural as well.

And finally, the emotions of the family members most affected go beyond grief, losing a son, losing a daughter, a brother, a sister, losing a close friend. You can go beyond grief to isolation and feeling despair. Those haunting words that were uttered on a hill on Calvary: "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?"

Despair is a natural emotion at a time like this. They're all natural, they're all appropriate, but let me ask one thing of you, this community, as you wrestle with your sadness, as you wrestle with your own feelings of anger, of confusion, as you wrestle with the despair, even you family members who have lost people close, you do not let hold of that spirit of community that makes Virginia Tech such a special place. Do not lose hold of that.

You need it as a university because you've always had it. You need to maintain it. We do not need that spirit of community to be a victim of yesterday.

You, as a community unified—together there is so much you can do for these family members to help bear them up, to help them deal with their grief. If you are unified, there is an incalculable amount you can do to help the family members and friends deal with the loss.

We need, in Virginia, that spirit of community that you have here. We are bold enough to call ourselves not a state but a commonwealth. A state is a dotted line, a state is a political subdivision; commonwealth has a meaning. The meaning is what

we have, the God-given and man-made resources that we have we hold in common for a community. And you at Virginia Tech can be that community and demonstrate that community for us in a way that will benefit the entire Commonwealth of Virginia.

And finally I would say to you, from having that vantage point of hearing about this on the other side of the world, it is not just for you that you need to maintain that spirit: the world needs you to, as well. Because the world was watching you yesterday, and in the darkest moment in the history of this university, the world saw you and it saw you respond in a way that built community.

I was reminded in the airport as we got ready to board to come back that I've seen this story before. I've turned on television and seen the bad news of a shooting or a weather emergency or a famine. I've seen these stories and there will be more stories, but there was something in the story yesterday that was different—and it was you. Your spirit, even in a dark day, of optimism and community and hope and of wanting to be together. You taught something good yesterday, even on a dark day, to people all around the world, and the world needs that example put forward.

And so I pledge to do all I can, President Steger and members of the community, and my team as well, to be with you in the coming days. To be alongside you in difficult times as we sort through and try to work with families and friends. You have a remarkable community here; just look around and see this. And see the thousands of students next door. This is a remarkable place. Do not let hold of that sense of community that is so powerful in this room. □



President George W. Bush

Governor, thank you. President Steger, thank you very much. Students, and faculty, and staff, and grieving family members, and members of this really extraordinary place.

Laura and I have come to Blacksburg today with hearts full of sorrow. This is a day of mourning for the Virginia Tech community—and it is a day of sadness for our entire nation. We've come to express our sympathy. In this time of anguish, I hope you know that people all over this country are thinking about you and asking God to provide comfort for all who have been affected.

Yesterday began like any other day. Students woke up, and they grabbed their backpacks and they headed for class. And soon the day took a dark turn, with students and faculty barricading themselves in classrooms and dormitories—confused, terrified, and deeply worried. By the end of the morning, it was the worst day of violence on a college campus in American history—and for many of you here today, it was the worst day of your lives.

It's impossible to make sense of such violence and suffering. Those whose lives were taken did nothing to deserve their fate. They were simply in the wrong place at the wrong time. Now

they're gone—and they leave behind grieving families, grieving classmates, and a grieving nation.

In such times as this, we look for sources of strength to sustain us. And in this moment of loss, you're finding these sources everywhere around you. These sources of strength are in this community, this college community. You have a compassionate and resilient community here at Virginia Tech. Even as yesterday's events were still unfolding, members of this community found each other; you came together in dorm rooms and dining halls and on blogs. One recent graduate wrote this: "I don't know most of you guys, but we're all Hokies, which means we're family. To all of you who are okay, I'm happy for that. For those of you who are in pain or have lost someone close to you, I'm sure you can call on any one of us and have help any time you need it."

These sources of strength are with your loved ones. For many of you, your first instinct was to call home and let your moms and dads know that you were okay. Others took on the terrible duty of calling the relatives of a classmate or a colleague who had been wounded or lost. I know many of you feel awfully far away from people you lean on and people you count on

JOSH ARMSTRONG



during difficult times. But as a dad, I can assure you, a parent's love is never far from his child's heart. And as you draw closer to your own families in the coming days, I ask you to reach out to those who ache for sons and daughters who will never come home.

These sources of strength are also in the faith that sustains so many of us. Across the town of Blacksburg and in towns all across America, houses of worship from every faith have opened their doors and have lifted you up in prayer. People who have never met you are praying for you; they're praying for your friends who have fallen and who are injured. There's a power in these prayers, real power. In times like this, we can find comfort in the grace and guidance of a loving God. As the Scriptures tell us, "Don't be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."

And on this terrible day of mourning, it's hard to imagine that a time will come when life at Virginia Tech will return to normal. But such a day will come. And when it does, you will always remember the friends and teachers who were lost yesterday and the time you shared with them and the lives they hoped to lead. May God bless you. May God bless and keep the souls of the lost. And may His love touch all those who suffer and grieve. □

JOHN MCCORMICK





JOSH ARMSTRONG

Jacob A. Lutz III

As a native of Blacksburg, an alumnus of Virginia Tech, and rector of the board of visitors, I want to express both my horror and shock at the events of yesterday and my appreciation for the outpouring of support from people around the world and for the many prayers that have been lifted on our behalf.

We gather this afternoon to mourn and pay homage to those innocent lives lost in this insensible tragedy. We gather as a family, as a community saddened beyond belief. We also recognize that we are part of a larger community—a national community dedicated to the teaching of our young people, performing critical research, and educating all of us.

Education is a critical component of a free and open society. Unfortunately, history teaches us that the horror that befell Virginia Tech yesterday has occurred and could occur at any institution. Our educational system is a national treasure, one that we must preserve and keep safe for our children and for the children of generations to come.

As President Bush noted yesterday, our sanctuary has been violated. We feel violated and are filled with sadness and grief. Yet, in our hearts, we know we must, somehow, move forward, as painful as those steps are. From somewhere in the human spirit, we can and will find the strength and courage to continue.

While it may seem an impossible task, we must move forward and begin the healing process. □



JOHN MCCORMICK



JOHN MCCORMICK

Nikki Giovanni

We are Virginia Tech.

We are sad today, and we will be sad for quite a while.
We are not moving on, we are embracing our mourning.

We are Virginia Tech.

We are strong enough to stand tall tearlessly, we are brave enough to bend to cry,
and we are sad enough to know that we must laugh again.

We are Virginia Tech.

We do not understand this tragedy. We know we did nothing to deserve it, but neither does a child in Africa dying of AIDS, neither do the invisible children walking the night away to avoid being captured by the rogue army, neither does the baby elephant watching his community being devastated for ivory, neither does the Mexican child looking for fresh water, neither does the Appalachian infant killed in the middle of the night in his crib in the home his father built with his own hands, being run over by a boulder because the land was destabilized. No one deserves a tragedy.

We are Virginia Tech.

The Hokie Nation embraces our own and reaches out with open hearts and hands to those who offer their hearts and minds. We are strong, and brave, and innocent, and unafraid. We are better than we think and not quite what we want to be. We are alive to the imaginations and the possibilities. We will continue to invent the future through our blood and tears and through all our sadness.

We are the Hokies.

We will prevail.

We *will* prevail.

We will *prevail*.

We are Virginia Tech. □

We will prevail

In the wake of April 16, the Hokie Nation grew stronger. Virginia Tech's students, faculty, and staff grieved with and consoled each other—friends and strangers alike—from the Drillfield to Cassell Coliseum. The following images capture but a fraction of the sorrow and support shared by members of the Virginia Tech community during the days following the tragedy.



JOSH ARMSTRONG



MICHAEL KIERNAN

Cadets volunteered to guard the Alumni Association wreath, first in the War Memorial Chapel and then at the cenotaph. According to Maj. Gen. Jerry Allen, commandant of cadets, there were so many volunteers that the tours of duty were reduced from one hour to 15 minutes.



COURTESY THE ROANOKE TIMES, MATT GENTRY



JOHN MCCORMICK

In front of Burruss Hall, individual Hokie Stones served as memorials for each victim. Family, friends, and other members of the Virginia Tech community later added flowers, candles, notes, and other memorabilia.

JOHN MCCORMICK



A candlelight vigil was held on the Drillfield on the evening of April 17.

JOSH ARMSTRONG





JOSH ARMSTRONG



COURTESY THE ROANOKE TIMES, JOSH MELTZER

After the April 17 Convocation, President George W. Bush and Gov. Tim Kaine viewed the memorabilia on the Drillfield and signed this “VT” cutout.



JOSH ARMSTRONG





JOSH ARMSTRONG



JOHN MCCORMICK



COURTESY THE ROANOKE TIMES, MATT GENTRY



JOSH ARMSTRONG



JOSH ARMSTRONG

MICHAEL KIERNAN



JOSH ARMSTRONG



JOHN MCCORMICK



Although Virginia Tech's spring football game was cancelled, alumni and supporters still traveled to campus that weekend, many of them attending the Friday night baseball game. As a result, an English Field-record crowd watched the Hokies play Miami after a moment of silence.





JOHN MCCORMICK

On April 23, exactly one week after the tragedy, balloons were released at the same time that the shootings in Norris Hall began.



Today, WE ARE ALL HOKIES

Since the events of April 16, the Virginia Tech community has been bolstered by an almost overwhelming outpouring of sympathy and encouragement from individuals and institutions around the world. These pages include just a few of the literally thousands of images and words of condolence and support received by the university.

From MIT to the University of Saskatchewan, hundreds of colleges and universities worldwide have paid tribute to Virginia Tech. The complete list of the institutions cannot be printed here because of limited space but can be viewed at www.vt.edu/tragedy/higher_ed_support.php, which includes links to the institutions' websites.

In addition to the higher education community, people, companies, and agencies across the globe have responded to our tragedy. Additional expressions of support are available at www.vtmagazine.vt.edu. To view all of the photographs, go to www.vt.edu/tragedy/photos.

Additionally, you can view a video tribute produced by Virginia Tech's Visual & Broadcast Communications unit at www.vt.edu/tragedy/in_memoriam.php.

Baylor University's Pat Neff Hall tower, usually illuminated only in the school's traditional green, was lit with Virginia Tech's school colors on April 23 and 24 to mark the return of Tech students to campus. Baylor specifically purchased lighting gels in Hokie maroon and orange for the tribute.

Being a Hokie is not a word, it's a lifestyle. It's who we are and what the university experience taught us; it's the comfort of having a family with us when we spread our wings. To the parents and friends of those who were lost, know that your son, daughter, father, mother, or friend was a member of our family and that we are all better because of them. They have touched the lives of others in a way that will inspire others who will carry on their memory. Hokies everywhere are feeling your pain and we are here for you.

— Sarah Osborn Welty '90, Marching Virginians 1987-1990



French students at Chatham Hall, an all-girls boarding school in Chatham, Va., honored the memory of Virginia Tech French instructor Jocelyne Couture-Nowak.



In Huntington, W. Va., we understand the chill that won't go away. Thirty-six years ago, nearly all the members of the Marshall University football team and several citizens, 75 people in all, died on a rain-soaked Saturday night when their plane crashed while returning from a game at East Carolina University. Their story is told in a recent motion picture, "We Are Marshall."

Today, the tragedy in Blacksburg has created a connection between Marshall University and Virginia Tech, one that we wish had never happened. The states of Virginia and West Virginia have always been separate but close. Blacksburg and Huntington. Virginia Tech and Marshall University. Our communities and universities are now linked by the two worst campus tragedies in U.S. history.

As the healing process goes, we are a little farther ahead of our brothers and sisters in Blacksburg with a head start of more than three decades. To those in Blacksburg who grieve and to those who sent your sons and daughters to Blacksburg, know that we stand beside you in your April mourning.

Today, at Marshall University, "We Are Virginia Tech."

— W. Joseph Wyatt, professor of psychology, Marshall University



Three floors of Squires Student Center were covered with banners, flags, and posters from other universities and organizations.

They are clashing colors, maroon and orange. As they say, it's a combination only a Hokie could love. But on [April 17], maroon and orange came together in a moving display of sympathy, support, and pride. Watching Virginia Tech students in school colors grieve together at the convocation in Cassell Coliseum got me choked up. When they concluded the afternoon by yelling "Let's go, Hokies!" I lost it. It was such a familiar expression of unity, but this time, it was summoned for an infinitely more profound occasion.

You don't arrive at Virginia Tech accidentally. You have to work to get there, journeying into the Blue Ridge Mountains. It's lovely, picturesque, and seems very far away from the dangers of the outside world. There is a collective strength of spirit there that feels quite different from other campuses we visit. It's a big school ... but it feels like a tight community. That spirit seems to endure long after students leave Blacksburg—once a Hokie, always a Hokie.

To the community of Virginia Tech and to the families of the victims, our thoughts will remain with you during the long, difficult healing process. Your sense of unity has never been more needed. It was touching that under the weight of so many other emotions, Tech students seemed saddened that the school they love could forever be branded as the site of an historic massacre.

To those of us who have spent time there, Tech will always be recognized for much more than the hours of tragedy on April 16, 2007. We look forward to our next chance to experience Virginia Tech pride firsthand.

— by ESPN "College GameDay" host Chris Fowler, originally published on *ESPN.com* on April 19, 2007, under the title "Campus tragedy will only bring tight community closer." Excerpted with permission.



JASON YORK AT GOPSPUSPORTS.COM

It would have been easy to mistake the annual Penn State Blue-White spring football scrimmage for a Virginia Tech game. The majority of the approximately 71,000 fans in attendance donned orange and maroon to show their support of Tech.



When the phone rang on the morning of April 16, I was writing an e-mail to a friend who is working in Afghanistan. There had been a suicide bombing a few miles from where he is stationed and he had written to say that he was okay. I was planning to say that perhaps he ought to come home earlier than September. Like, tomorrow. I didn't know, as I wrote, that a tragedy was happening 20 miles away. I learned of it in a phone call from my cousin in Las Vegas. "Headline News" was on in his hotel. In my little office on the mountainside, the TV was off.

"I just heard about the shooting at Virginia Tech," he said. "Twenty-two people dead (then). Do you know anybody there?"

Well, yeah. Dozens of people. It's just down the road.

My husband and I have degrees from Tech, and I once worked in the building in front of Norris. My children are students at Roanoke College with half their high school classmates enrolled at Tech. I know professors and staff members, but my closest connection nowadays is the young NASCAR driver who helped with my new novel. He is in graduate school at Virginia Tech and my first thought that morning was whether he was safe.

"He's fine," I thought. "What are the odds?"

I called him anyway. Got his voice mail. "I know you're fine," I said, feeling stupid. "Please let me know for sure, though."

And he was fine. But it was devastating. So close to home. The waiting to see if any of the victims were friends of my family or of our friends. How many degrees of separation? I wrote back to my friend in Afghanistan, "You might as well stay put. It isn't safe anywhere anymore."

— Sharyn McCrumb M.A. '85, author of several *New York Times* best-selling novels.



A black flag was hung in the atrium of the College of Architecture at Texas A&M University.





Niagara Falls was bathed in orange and maroon lights in honor of Virginia Tech, marking the first time that the falls have been lit in the wake of a tragedy.

The Student Union of Serbia expresses its deepest sympathy for the families of students murdered at Virginia Tech, as well as to all citizens of the United States of America. In these hard times for Blacksburg, Va., and for all of the United States, the students of Serbia feel compassion for our American colleagues' sorrow and encourage them to find the way to continue normal life, as hard as that seems now.

— The Student Union of Serbia, Belgrade, Serbia, received April 17, 2007.

“Today, we are all Hokies.” That has been the constant message I have received from around the nation and the world concerning the events of April 16. The outpouring of love for our beloved university has been gratifying and stunning.

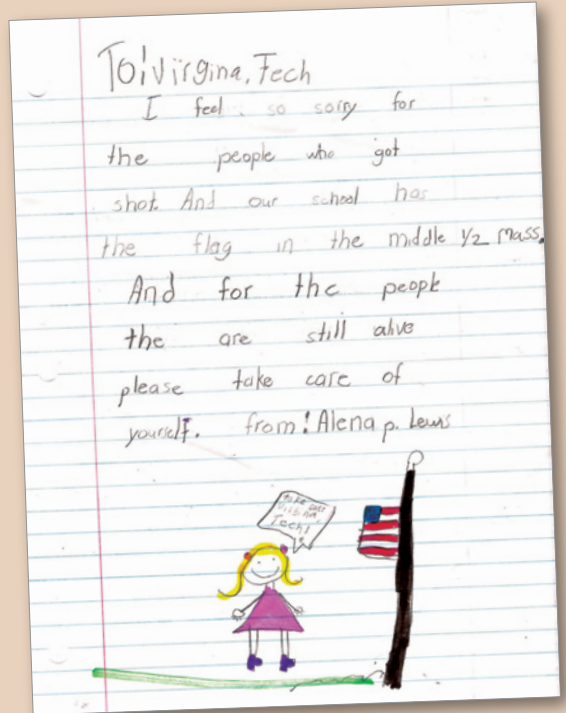
Today, there is pain everywhere in our community, and our hearts are troubled. Yet I am certain that our university will persevere. The spirit of Virginia Tech cannot allow otherwise. We who once walked its halls and studied in its classrooms were trained to represent all that is good and right in the world and we will prevail. Evil can never succeed, not while there are men and women like the people of Virginia Tech who, every day, reach for success and endeavor to improve the human condition. More than ever, I am proud to be part of the community of Virginia Tech.

— Homer Hickham '64, author of several best-selling novels, including *Rocket Boys*, which was made into the film “October Sky.”

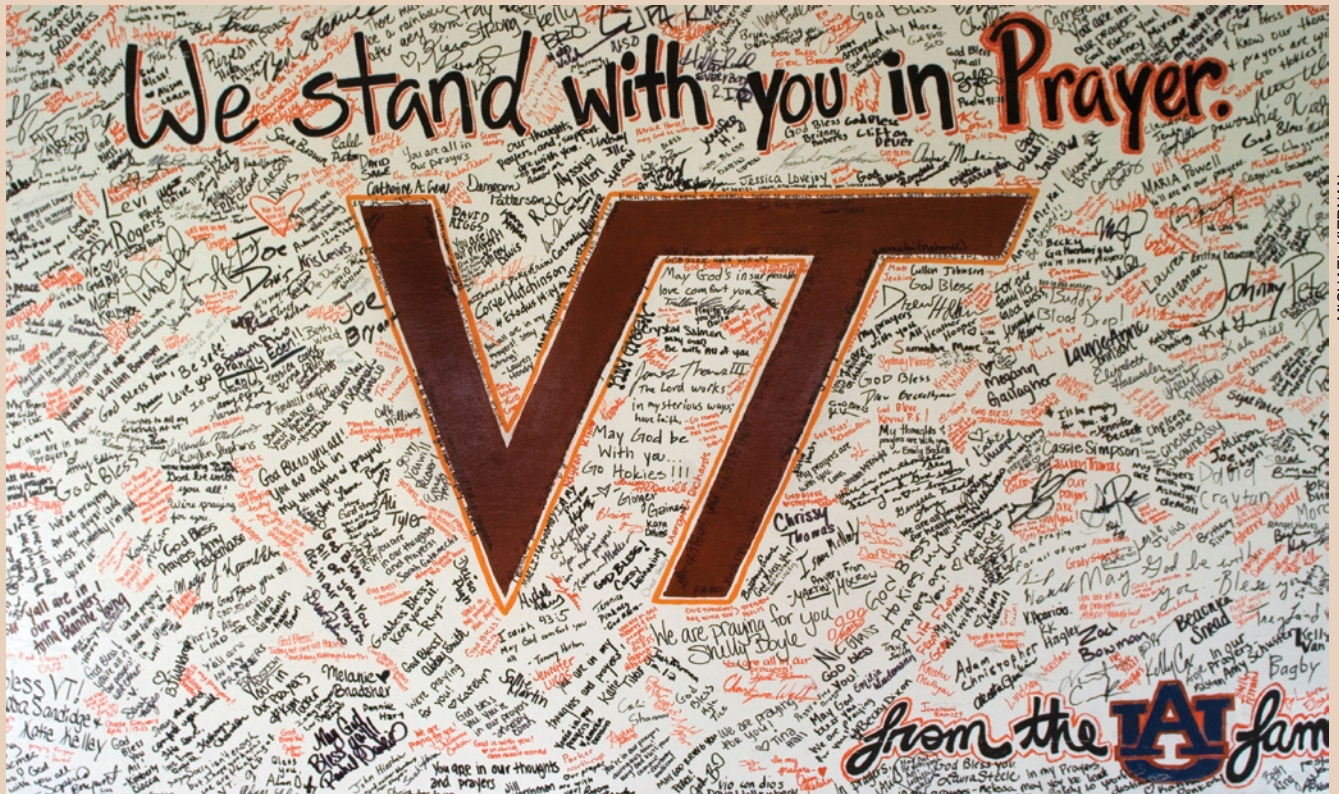
Today, the world wears orange and maroon. It is at the same time overwhelming, comforting, and disorienting. Everyone asks if we knew any of the victims. We knew them all. Because not long ago, they were behind us at the grocery store or next to us at church, or simply breathing the same glorious mountain air that we were. They loved this place as much as we do but were robbed of the chance to enjoy it any longer.

We know the university by heart, but now our hearts are broken. Yet some things haven't changed. I look at Virginia Tech students and see in them the person I someday hope to be. Brotherhood, Honor, Leadership, Loyalty, Service, Sacrifice, and Duty have never been more evident. We will not let one person destroy what always has been so good and true—we are a community, not a crime scene. On April 16, the heroism of our police force, the bravery of our neighbors, and the lives of 32 beautiful people showed us, once again, that there is still no better place to call home.

— Ann Cassell, lifelong Blacksburg resident



From second-grader Alena Lewis of Titusville, Fla. After she asked, “Mommy, why is the flag flying lower today?” and was told that something had happened at Virginia Tech, Alena wrote this letter.



MICHAEL KIERNAN



Collecting and preserving the stories of April 16

Using electronic media, the April 16 Archive was created to collect, preserve, and present the stories and a digital record of the tragedy at Virginia Tech. The university's Center for Digital Discourse and Culture launched this project with assistance from George Mason University's Center for History and New Media. Numerous Virginia Tech students, faculty, and staff members have volunteered to help curate and maintain the archive, and they welcome contributions from members of the Virginia Tech community and others who wish to share their stories about the events of April 16. To access the archive, go to www.april16archive.org.

Choose one

While the images and emotions of April 16 are seared into our collective consciousness, our own lives, with all of the demands of the modern world, will cause the memories to fade, likely more quickly than we might think. Over time, we will struggle with remembering so many names and, unfortunately, the only name we will probably always remember will be the one that we should all do our best to forget.

For this reason, I ask all members of the Hokie Nation and others touched by our tragedy to choose one name, to select one of the 32 victims to remember. Study their pictures to remember their smiles. Take note of their passions, their accomplishments, and their dreams and wishes. Learn everything you can so that no matter how much time passes, at least a little memory of that person will remain with you. Perhaps, after many years, the name you have chosen will be all that is left, but it will be a name worthy of remembrance.

Let us all lift upon our shoulders the victims we have chosen and carry them with us so that they may, through us, live the lives that they should have. Every time we don the orange and maroon, let's think of them. Every time we meet up with fellow alumni, think of them. Every time we see "VT" or the HokieBird and every time we jump up and down as "Enter Sandman" plays while the football team takes the field, let them whisper in our ears, "Go Hokies." Let us carry them forward so that we can forget the one name we shouldn't remember and instead recall more than just a date.

Choose one.

— Michael Olsen M.S.'00, Alexandria, Va.



DAVE KNACHEL

Date: April 21, 2007
From: Maj. Gen. Jerry Allen, USAF (Ret.), commandant of cadets
To: The members of the regiment

It is impossible to make any sense of the tragedy that took place here on 16 April. But one thing is clear: your professionalism and leadership by example are already shaping the future at Virginia Tech. From President Steger's office to alumni worldwide, we have received countless messages of thanks for the leadership demonstrated by the Virginia Tech Corps of Cadets. These comments are primarily based on what people saw at the Convocation as the Highty-Tighties and Color Guard did their duty, along with dozens of cadets who added dignity to the event by serving as ushers.

Yet most people are not aware of the many other things you did. One cadet led his classmates out of a Norris classroom. You and your commanders established accountability very quickly and accurately. Cadets helped lead the evacuation of the academic area.

You volunteered to guard the Alumni Association wreath in the chapel and then in front of the cenotaph. There were so many volunteers that the tours of duty were reduced from one hour to 15 minutes.

One of my most emotional experiences in nine years as commandant occurred as the deputies and I marched behind the regiment en route to the candlelight vigil on Tuesday evening. As we came down the hill from the PAB toward Burruss, the entire regiment stretched out in front of us. It was a marvelous display of outstanding cadets in distinctive blue-and-white uniforms. You exemplified the spirit of *Ut Prosim*. I was proud of your professionalism, and the crowds watched you with great respect. And, of course, they were reverent during Echo Taps.

On Sunday [April 22], Col. Roszak, Maj. McNeill, Col. Lentz, several cadets, and I will travel to New Jersey for Matt La Porte's services. Lt. Col. Payne is already there, assisting the family. We expect that the family will also come to Blacksburg for services at the Blacksburg Catholic Church and burial on April 25. The entire regiment will participate in honoring Matt.

Two law enforcement officers have told us they are convinced that Matt La Porte made an heroic attempt to subdue the shooter. Matt's effort to help others was courageous. His family is also demonstrating amazing courage. They have said that they have no anger toward Virginia Tech and that their aim is to help the university recover.

Please keep the La Porte family and the families of all of the deceased and wounded in your thoughts and prayers.

Thank you for your leadership.

The world now knows Virginia Tech

by Vice President for Alumni Relations Tom Tillar '69

More than 40 years ago, I first arrived on this campus as a student. Charles Steger lived in my residence hall, just a few doors away, and was in several of my classes. We became friends. We enjoyed a campus that was safe, beautiful, and so inviting to its brand-new students. Little did we know that we would spend our entire careers working for our alma mater. It truly is an honor and a privilege to serve the institution that helped shape our values and fulfilled our passion to serve in a community of learning.

No one that I know could do a better job of leading Virginia Tech and guiding us through this recent crisis than our president, Charles Steger. He is a talented and gifted leader in the academic world. On April 16, he rose to the occasion far beyond the expectations of all who work with him. Charles was given the longest standing ovation at the Memorial Convocation on April 17—in front of both the president of the United States and the governor of Virginia—and it was a visible symbol of the gratitude of a grieving university community and, indeed, an entire nation.

Virginia Tech is a special place and community in the hearts of thousands, now millions, of people worldwide. The college is associated with beauty and serenity in Southwest Virginia. Blacksburg is a college town. Everyone who lives here, passes through here, attends Virginia Tech, or attends a sporting event feels ownership of this place.

Our campus, our sanctuary of learning, has been violated beyond anyone's imagination. The pain caused by the events of April 16 resonated around the entire world—not just with alumni, but with millions who have never been here in person. Somehow, they understand and appreciate the value and quality of a place dedicated to the missions of teaching, research, and outreach.

The world mourns with us that violation of a campus and

town that invite students to come to live and learn as Charles and I did years ago. It is important for the world to know that Virginia Tech remains a place that our current students love, that our alumni treasure, and that all who visit can still call their own.

I have walked among students struggling with their grief. I felt a spirit of hope every time I mingled with the thousands of students, families, alumni, and friends who were drawn to this place after the tragedy. To know that people all over the world share that grief with us is incredibly comforting and powerful.

The demonstrations of support across the country and around the world are far too many to list, and there are many that we may never even learn about. The special events, the memorial services, the candlelight vigils, the concerts, and the many public tributes said that Virginia Tech was in people's hearts and prayers. The welfare of our community was foremost on the minds of those who saw images and watched, heard, or read interviews with our brave students faculty, staff, and alumni. Even at the South Pole, an American flag was lowered at a research facility surrounded by many nations' flags.

Poet Nikki Giovanni closed our Memorial Convocation with the words, "We will prevail. We are Virginia Tech." Now etched in the hearts of everyone who sympathized with the families that lost their loved ones, her words rang across the world so loudly that they made hearts soar with hope for the future. They were the perfect inspiration in the very darkest hour of a university torn apart with sadness and grief.

We realize that tragedy does strike when and where it may be least expected. And we have learned that strength can be drawn from such horrific events. Virginia Tech is a place that cannot be beaten down by tragedy of this proportion; it is a place that students did not leave during its darkest hours. We



President Charles Steger places a single rose on a memorial, created by students in front of Burruss Hall, concluding the statewide “moment of silence” observance on April 20.

know that thousands of new students will come for the same experience that current ones are having. And, yes, they too will become proud alumni and join you in carrying the torch of *Ut Prosim* (That I May Serve).

A moving illustration of the tragedy we have all just lived through is in the story of one of our professors who lost his daughter in Norris Hall. He sent an e-mail to his classes later that day saying that he was unsure how or where classes would continue. And he gave his students one final assignment: “. . . perhaps the most important lesson you will learn in life. Go to your mother, father, brothers, and sisters and tell them with all your heart how much you love them. And tell them that you know how much they love you, too. Go out of your way to make good memories. At some point, those memories may be all you have left.”

I recall an occasion in the mid-80s at which Robert Pamplin Sr.—for whom the College of Business and its building are both named—read an official statement to kick off the university’s first major capital campaign. A bit uncomfortably, he read the words that had been written for him, and then he put down

his script and said, “Now let me tell you what is in my heart.” He explained that life had treated him well, and he felt an obligation and satisfaction in giving back to the place that had given him the most rewarding experiences of his life.

Now, let me tell you what is in my heart: Virginia Tech has drawn and will continue to draw strength from unity, whether making memories with friends, recalling those memories, bonding with other students and professors, or simply learning from the amazing group of fine people who are drawn to this place. Our alumni must continue to come together wherever they live. They must continue to connect by phone, e-mail, or in person to renew their bonds. And they must show the world how much they love their alma mater. Because there is no more special place in the entire world.

As the eyes of the world peer at us, they see what makes us truly a Hokie Nation. They see what makes us the proudest alumni in the world. And they come to understand that this feeling is so very powerful that it never, never can be violated or destroyed.

WE are Virginia Tech. *VirginiaTechforlife.* □



JOSH ARMSTRONG

The Hokie spirit shines brightly

The Hokie Nation embraces its own and reaches out with open heart and hands to those who offer their hearts and minds. We are strong, and brave, and innocent, and unafraid.

—Nikki Giovanni

The generosity we have witnessed in the wake of April 16 is awe-inspiring. Hokies across the nation have come together and it has been reaffirming for everyone at the university to know you are out there. In addition to the friends and alumni who already have a connection to our campus, we have seen an expanding Hokie family worldwide and for that we are truly grateful.

Another incredible outpouring of support has come in the form of gifts of all shapes and sizes donated to the Hokie Spirit Memorial Fund, which was established to offer assistance to those affected by the tragedy. There has also been strong support of the Hokie Spirit Scholarship Fund, which includes 32 scholarships, one in the name of each victim.

From individuals to organizations, from corporations to sports rivals, gifts have come from around the world. A seven-year-old girl sent a box filled with pennies and nickels, totaling \$5.36—all the money she had—to “the Virginia Tech kids.” A man who escaped the 104th floor of the World Trade Center II on 9/11 also made a gift to Virginia Tech. The White House Correspondents Association so respected the work of our student journalists that it presented a check to *The Collegiate Times* at its annual dinner.

Many corporations have offered to match their employees’ contributions in addition to making their own gifts. And during this time of need for our community, traditional sports rivalries have taken a back seat to grief. In a letter to Virginia Tech students, students from the University of Virginia said, “Charlottesville and

all its Wahoos now understand the true meaning of Hokie Pride.” In that spirit of understanding, they have joined with their Hokie brothers and sisters by making a significant donation to Tech through their Hoos for Hokies fund.

While the events of April 16 will never be forgotten, they have demonstrated the Hokie Nation’s ability to turn a moment of crisis into one of hope. We will continue to celebrate and embrace the Hokie Spirit, a special bond that we all share. Today, we are more confident than ever before that our bond will grow even stronger and more resilient.

Thank you for your continued support.

To contribute to any of these funds, you may visit our secure online giving page at www.givingto.vt.edu and select the desired name from the pull-down menu. Here, you will also find other stories that illustrate the touching ways people from all across the United States have helped the Hokie Nation heal.

If you would like to mail a check, make it out to Virginia Tech Foundation Inc., designate your gift for the appropriate fund on the memo line, and send it to the following address:

**Gift Accounting
University Development (0336)
Virginia Tech
Blacksburg, VA 24061**

4.16.07

4.

mourning doves wooed us at dusk.
warm weather early this year,
our pear trees and dogwoods
had blossomed too soon. jonquils
bristled in auspicious clusters.
even the stateliest branches
teased us with touches of color.

such delicacy,
surely gifted by nature's
infinite desires, must likewise
bear her surprises. for she
is true only to self. in time,

a bitter frost stunned
nearly all the blooms, left some
withered, others gray, a fitting
tableau for the cruelest month:
flowers slumped, blossoms
in wait, and the living in mosaic
with its dead.

16.

the wind ripped us
that day, blasted into the valley with a vengeance,
other sound swept
away.

but not the shots.

not the wail and crumble
of our native stone

Forever.

above us, the speechless
streaks of orange and sanguine maroon
morphed into an unfamiliar haze.

and the wind, prevailing, kept its long vigil,

blew blossoms in tatters
into a fierce spring snow, the glittering
of tears untold.

Hokie Spirit Memorial Fund



To remember and honor the victims of the tragic events of April 16 and to aid in the healing process, the university has established the Hokie Spirit Memorial Fund.

For more information, go to www.vt.edu/tragedy/memorial_fund.php or turn to page 48.

