



'His life touched so many'

By [Karen Jeffrey](#)

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Famil Yarmouth officials hope to honor murder victim with park bench.

SOUTH YARMOUTH - The parents of murder victim Spencer MacLeod hope to see his life memorialized with a bench at Old Townhouse Park before the summer is over.

Spencer MacLeod Nothing fancy, nothing complicated, just a place for young people to catch their breath between games.

Or it can serve parents who watch as their young children run, jump and fill the summer air with the noise of youthful exuberance.

It is hardly surprising that the mother and father of a murder victim want to see their child remembered in such a public way. But there is something unique about the fund-raising campaign, which was just launched in the hope of raising about \$800 for the bench and plaque.

Yarmouth police and the town recreation department are also involved.

And the man who prosecuted the six young men charged in connection with MacLeod's death is keeping his calendar open to attend dedication services when they are formalized.

"Spencer MacLeod was a hero. He did not hesitate to step in to defend a friend," says Robert Welsh, the Cape and Islands assistant district attorney who handled the six prosecutions arising out of this case.

"He was a remarkable young man who paid the ultimate price for his loyalty to a friend," Welsh says.

"Spencer MacLeod is literally a young man who gave his life in defense of another," said Yarmouth Police Chief Peter Carnes. "His life touched so many people and continues to do so even in death. "

His sacrifice It is this legacy that MacLeod's parents, Peter MacLeod of Orleans and Robin Farnsworth, now of Pawtucket, R.I., want to see memorialized with a bench at a place where children and parents relish family ties.

His parents emphasize that any memorial to their son would be incomplete if it did not also express their gratitude to police and the district attorney's office for the "compassion they all showed us," Farnsworth says.

"From the night of Spencer's death through all the court proceedings, we were treated with sympathy and respect.

"I expected people to do their jobs - the police to investigate and arrest, the district attorney's office to prosecute," she says. "What I never anticipated was how hard they all worked and how much they cared about what Spencer's family was going through."

MacLeod died in January 2002 after being stabbed and beaten during a home invasion at a friend's home in South Yarmouth.

Six young men armed with clubs and knives, seeking retaliation for a fight that occurred earlier that night at a party in West Dennis, broke into a townhouse at Swan Pond Village where MacLeod happened to be spending the night. MacLeod had not attended the earlier party.

But MacLeod, 21, took the brunt of an attack after rushing downstairs from a second-floor bedroom to help his friend Shawn Kimball, then 21.

Kimball survived after undergoing major surgery months of rehabilitation.

MacLeod died at the scene, with another friend cradling his head and offering him comfort.

"You learn to accept what has happened, but there's no such thing as recovering from this type of loss," says Farnsworth.

Mother was on dutyA registered nurse, Farnsworth was on duty in the Cape Cod Hospital emergency room when Yarmouth rescue personnel rushed two stabbing victims to the hospital.

With the help of others, Farnsworth prepared the trauma room. When the ambulance arrived, she watched as the most critically wounded of the young men was wheeled into her care. From where she stood, Farnsworth could not see his face. But she could see that his young body was unnaturally pale from the bleeding of his many wounds.

She and others worked feverishly to save the man, but 15 minutes later he was pronounced dead.

His wallet was opened and Farnsworth's world shattered. At first she could not comprehend why her son's identification would be in a dead man's wallet.

"Faith saved me," she says now. "Without my faith in Christ, I would never have survived this. My church, family friends have been a comfort and support. But the real truth is Christ saved me."

Faith has also enabled Farnsworth to forgive the young men responsible for his death.

"Spencer grew up with all the kids involved in the fight. Even after he became a Christian, he remained in contact with many of them. He invited them all to church. He shared his changed life with them and encouraged them to change their lives, " she says.

"In his teens, he had his share of fights and troubles. But he outgrew that. He turned to Christ and his life changed."

Last June, nearly 18 months after MacLeod was laid to rest in a Yarmouthport cemetery, one of those friends, Zane Rasmusen, 21, was sentenced to life in prison without possibility of parole. Rasmusen, who was said to be the most culpable of those who attacked MacLeod, was convicted of first-degree murder following a trial in Barnstable Superior Court.

In the weeks that followed, the others pleaded guilty rather than go to trial. These included Brandon Sweeney, 21, sentenced to 18 to 20 years in prison for involuntary manslaughter, armed burglar assault and battery with a dangerous weapon Rudolfo Viera, 21, and David Myland, 20, each sentenced to life in prison with possibility of parole after 15 years, for second-degree murder, home invasion, armed burglar assault and battery with a dangerous weapon Christopher Gonsalves, 21, sentenced to five years for breaking and entering and Christopher Mello received a two-year sentence after pleading guilty to breaking and entering.

Trying to go on livingIn the two and a half years since MacLeod's death, his loved ones have tried to put their lives back together.

Younger brother Miles is graduating from college this year with a degree in literature. Younger brother Jake has moved to Pawtucket, where Farnsworth and her husband have moved to pastor a mission church started by members of Victory Chapel in Hyannis, which MacLeod had attended.

His father, Peter MacLeod, still lives in Orleans where he and his wife own a painting business and video store. They are raising Spencer's two youngest sisters.

"I have no doubt that as Spencer drew his last breath he forgave his friends. That's the kind of kid he was," says Peter MacLeod.

"Don't get me wrong. Robin and I would trade all of that to have our son health alive," he says. "But Spencer died a hero and I am proud to have been his father.

"Spencer's faith defined who he was ... one thing that was very special about Spencer, when he changed his life,

he never dumped his friends. He invited them into his life and tried to share his faith with them," Peter MacLeod says. "I was always in awe of Spencer's faith and Robin's faith."

Farnsworth admits that moving from the Cape was at once difficult and a relief.

"It's been healthy for me not to drive past Swan Pond Village every day," she says of the place where Spencer died.

"But it was also hard to leave, knowing Spencer is buried here," she says.

"We want to see something that brings dignity to Spencer's death, something that is a testament to things that were important to Spencer - family, friends and faith in God," says Farnsworth of plans for the bench.

The plaque will include a quote that all who knew Spencer agree characterizes his life as well as his death - "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."

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