



GORDIE CENTER
FALL 2024

Learn. Connect. Act.

Welcome! We're so grateful that the Gordie Center's mission to end hazing and substance misuse among college and high school students is meaningful to you. Whether you made your first gift to the Gordie Center this year, you've faithfully given every year, or you support our work in other ways, we are so glad to have you on our team. Thank you!

Learn





How does your support help the Gordie Center reach students, families, and communities?

Giving to the Gordie Center makes a huge difference. Our staff is small, and our mission is big. This past year, our team presented 155 programs to high school and college students and their parents, reaching over 11,000 people! We also conducted three national substance misuse prevention conferences for student-athletes, created short videos for parents, and contributed to several national resources for college prevention specialists. Your donations directly support us in sharing critical education that saves lives. Help us reach even more students at our UVA home and nationally!

Connect




Why support the Gordie Center?


Our donors tell us they give for many reasons, including:

-  They know that hazing and alcohol overdose can happen to anyone — even their own student.
-  They know someone who experienced hazing or substance misuse.
-  They lost a family member or friend to overdose and/or hazing.
-  They saw a news story about the impact of hazing and alcohol overdose.

Act

How can you help?

-  Respond compassionately.
-  Support lifesaving education to keep students safe.
-  Change tragedy into positive action that saves lives.

Read the stories included in this publication to learn more about the work of the Gordie Center and the heartbreaking impact of hazing. Visit gordie.org, share our posts on social media, and talk with the students in your life about hazing and the PUBS signs of alcohol overdose. Donate to the Gordie Center today — turn your concern into action by providing lifesaving education! 



Gordie's family: stepfather Michael, mother Leslie, sister Lily, and brother-in-law John holding daughter Margot.

Dear Friends,

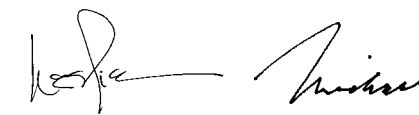
This marks the 14th year since **The Gordie Foundation** moved from Dallas to Charlottesville and became the **Gordie Center at the University of Virginia**. And sadly, this September also marked the 20th anniversary of Gordie's death. It's very difficult to believe he has been gone 20 years, but in that time, we have learned and accomplished so much in our mission to end hazing, so that no other family has to suffer the loss of a child this way. Lately I've often tried to imagine what Gordie would be like at 38. Would he be an actor, a banker, a football coach, a musician, a comedian, or working for the Cowboys? It's hard to imagine, but because his life ended tragically at 18, we'll never know. Potential is a hard thing to bury.

I'd particularly like to thank the Gordie Center team for their continued commitment to end all hazing. Most recently, they worked with our *HAZE* documentary director, Pete Schuermann, to develop a 20-minute "proof-of-concept" film (*HAZED: Shattered Trust*) to build excitement and funding for a 6-part documentary series that will provide an in-depth exploration of hazing, with a focus on potential solutions. We are grateful to Robin Wright for continuing her commitment to this important issue by providing the opening narration.

This fall, I had the great honor to be invited to Washington, DC to be with other parents when our children's names were read into the Congressional Record and the U.S. House of Representatives unanimously passed the **Stop Campus Hazing Act**, a bipartisan Federal anti-hazing bill.

Lastly, thank you to all the new friends, families, and colleagues we've met in the last year who are with us in this fight. You inspire us to stay strong and hang in there, despite challenges. Most importantly, to all our generous supporters, volunteers, family, and friends, thank you for making it possible for us to do the work we do in Gordie's honor and for all the other children who have been lost to hazing. Thank you from our family to yours. We wish you and your families warm and joyous holidays full of love, hope, and laughter.

Sincerely,

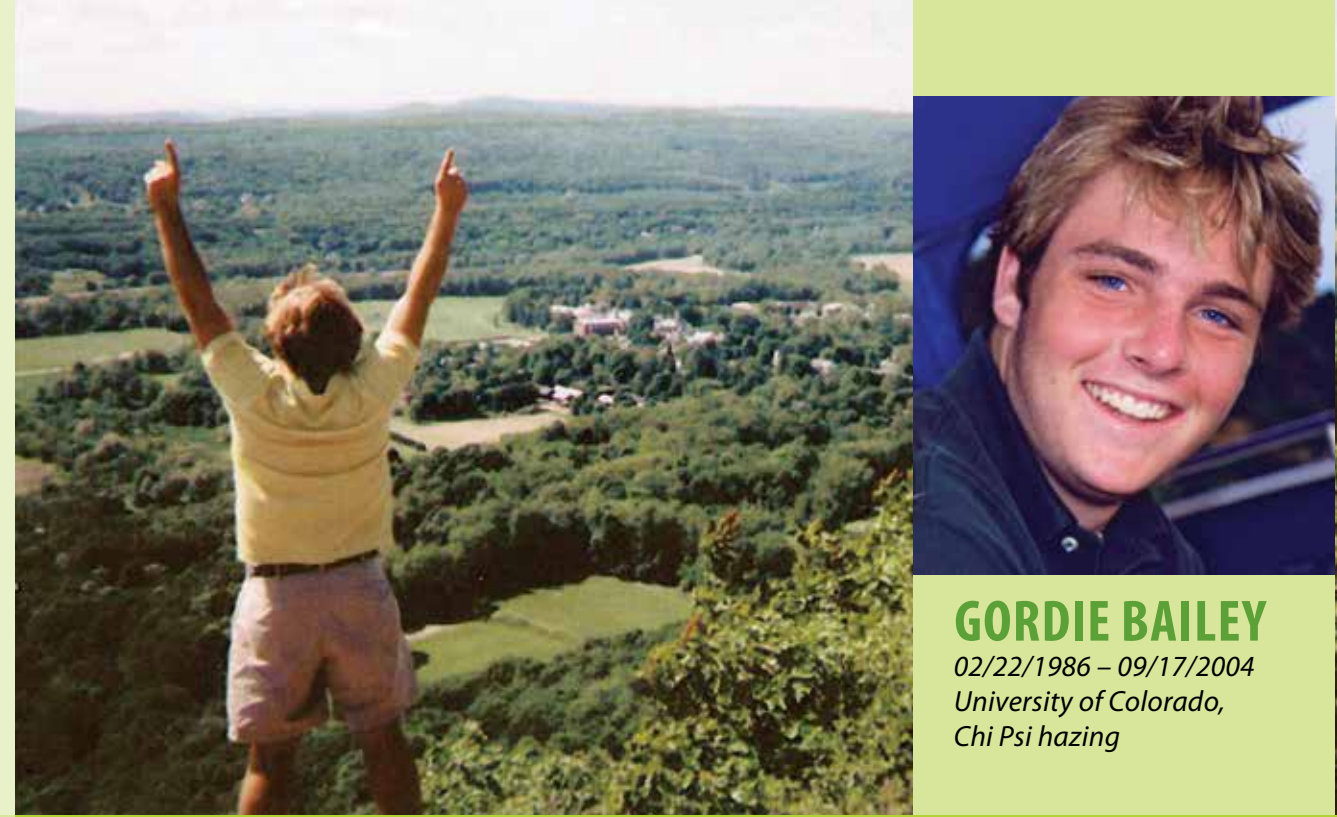


Leslie and Michael Lanahan
Lily, John, and Margot DePeters

Twenty Years

Gordie Bailey was only 18 when his life was cut short by fraternity hazing and alcohol overdose. Now, 20 years later, his memory lives on as both a reminder and a call to action: **Save a Life. Make the Call.** Gordie's story has saved countless lives through that one simple message. The impact of hazing and substance misuse extends beyond individuals, creating a ripple of pain and loss felt deeply by families, friends, and communities, as Gordie's family knows all too well.

At the Gordie Center, we honor the lives of those impacted by hazing and substance misuse. We provide support and partner with families who share this painful experience. New families are added to the list every year, a stark reminder that **our work is not over — hazing and alcohol overdose are entirely preventable.** The Gordie Center's education and outreach saves lives by empowering students to end the cycle of hazing, recognize the signs of alcohol overdose, and prevent more families from enduring tragedy. ❁



GORDIE BAILEY
02/22/1986 – 09/17/2004
University of Colorado,
Chi Psi hazing

Twenty years ago, when Gordie Bailey died at the University of Colorado (CU), I was president of the Alpha Epsilon Pi (AEPi) fraternity chapter at CU, and it shook me to my core that this tragedy could happen in my Greek community, at my school where the fight song lyrics embody a spirit of togetherness in standing “shoulder to shoulder.” **I never knew Gordie, but his passing charted a course for the next 20 years of my life.** I am now the CEO of AEPi, and over the years, our membership has heard me share Gordie's story and what a hazing death does to a campus, to a fraternity, and to a family. I first experienced hazing in high school, as do about half of all high school students according to national studies, and I thought it to be a normal rite of passage. Many even younger students experience forms of hazing at summer camp or in youth organizations and on athletic teams. In families, students hear stories from parents and grandparents about the hazing that they endured and perpetrated. For many years, hazing was accepted, if not glorified, as part of our culture, especially within fraternity life and athletics. The world has changed for the better. The level of information that is available about

hazing today is far superior to any time in our history. Today, we know about the risks, and we also know about the invisible scars of mental trauma that come from being hazed and from hazing others. I am so thankful for the work of the Gordie Center and hope that someday we truly end hazing and substance misuse on campus.

In my role as AEPi CEO, I ask for the help of our student members in combatting hazing, and I ask the same of alumni. When parents and role models glorify hazing, students seek to replicate the experience. I ask alumni to think about how hazing stories are received by sons, daughters, nieces, and nephews. If our alumni joke about these experiences, they need to tell the rest of the story. How did the experience make you feel in the moment? Do you believe that it helped you to become a better person? Did you feel pressured to inflict these “traditions” on others? Together, we can eliminate hazing. There is no better way to remember Gordie Bailey and honor his family along with the countless other families who have been impacted by hazing.

— Rob Derdiger, Alpha Epsilon Pi CEO

Hazing can happen to anyone.



Gordie's story has been saving lives for 20 years, with the Gordie Center providing education for students and communities to prevent hazing and alcohol overdose since 2010. We are so grateful for the partnership and support of Gordie's family and honored to be part of Gordie's legacy. ❁

Clockwise from top left: Leslie, Jill, and Susie at a UVA football game in October 2024; Michael, Leslie, Lily, and John at the football game; Jill, Michael, Susie's son Matt, Susie, and Leslie at a UVA lacrosse game in April 2024.





Out of the Locker Room

A family's fight to protect high school students from hazing



“I never imagined I would need to have a conversation about hazing with my high school freshman.” In late August 2023, Ava Taylor received a call from her 14-year-old son’s Florida public high school. It was just a week into the semester, and the school administrator told Ava that a concerning incident involving her son had occurred in the football team locker room. A video of the incident was circulating around social media and via text throughout the school’s student body. Ava learned that her son, Everett, was held down on the locker room floor while other students on the football team assaulted him, simulating sexual acts and throwing condoms at him. Ava, who serves on active duty in the military, was stunned. “I was familiar with hazing from my time in college and through my military background. I understood it as an initiation process that could involve humiliation, cruelty, and both mental and physical harm. Even though I felt I had a good understanding of hazing, I didn’t notice any signs that something was going on with Everett at the time. I talked to my son every day about how his practices were going, and there was never any indication that something was wrong.” Ava remembered a day earlier in the week when Everett returned from practice a lot later than she expected, but he told her that they had been watching film and hanging out in the locker room. “She asks me how I’m doing and how my day was every day,” Everett says. “I didn’t tell her what happened because I was embarrassed and upset.”

As a military child, Everett has lived in Virginia, Guam, Georgia, and Florida. His favorite subject in school is science, and he loves playing football, hanging out with his friends, and playing video games. The military stationed Ava in Florida the summer before Everett’s 8th grade year and, knowing the social and academic toll frequent moves can have on military children, Ava requested to extend her time in Florida through Everett’s high school years (a 5-year tour instead of the typical 2–3

year tour). The military granted her request, so she and Everett settled into life in Florida. Everett’s 8th grade year was rocky, as being a new kid in an established community can often be for military children, and he was looking forward to moving on to high school and playing on their football team. The excitement for a new year at a new school ended before classes had even started, when Everett was hazed by his teammates. During the assault in the locker room, Everett “was upset and in fight or flight mode.” Afterward, Everett says, “It changed me. It flipped my life upside down. I felt like everybody knew it was me in the video on social media. That made me not want to go to school or play football.” The school fired the football coach (who had been in the room next to the locker room when Everett was hazed), forfeited the first football game of the season, and suspended the football team when the video surfaced. That suspension lasted less than a week — the team was allowed to practice and resume their season after protests from students and parents involved in the football and cheerleading programs.

“It changed me. It flipped my life upside down.”

When Ava learned what happened, she promised Everett that she would get to the bottom of it. She spoke at the school board meeting where other families were supporting the football team, and to the media. Ava felt like her son’s experience was lost in the uproar over the football season — that the trauma inflicted on Everett was an afterthought. “As a parent, you never expect your child to go through something as painful as hazing,” Ava says. “It was heartbreaking trying to piece everything back together, especially with the hazing video circulating on social media. His father and I, as co-parents, made sure he knew we were there for him every step of the way. We supported Everett by allowing him to make

Left: Everett (#50) and his high school football team.

decisions where he had control, appropriate for his age. We reassured him that he did nothing wrong and wasn't at fault for the way he was treated." Ava told Everett that she could not allow him to return to that school, as she did not feel it was safe for him. Everett moved to another high school, but since it is outside their district, Ava now drives him to and from school every day. Now Everett was adjusting to yet another new school, without the structure and camaraderie of football, while also dealing with his experience at his former school. "We made sure he received trauma therapy to help him process what happened," says Ava. "Rebuilding his confidence and reinforcing what he's learned in therapy has been a continuous process. I even had to seek counseling for myself to cope." Everett echoes his mom: "Counseling really helped me in the months and year that

has followed. It has made me mentally and physically tougher."

Everett's gym teacher also happened to be the football coach at his new school — after a few weeks of classes and establishing a rapport with Everett, the coach asked him to attend a team practice. "After the hazing, I didn't want to play football anymore," Everett says, but the personal outreach from the coach helped him feel more comfortable. He talked to his mom and decided to join the team at his new school. "When he decided to return to football, I supported him, but I made it clear that I needed to speak with the athletic director before he stepped back onto the field." Ava was especially nervous because one of Everett's first home games on the new team was against a familiar opponent: his former high school. Everett's team won the game 48–0. "Some players realized Everett was

out there, but it was uneventful...they took the loss quietly," Ava says with a smile. Now in his sophomore year playing both JV and varsity football, Everett returned to the field of his former high school for a game in September, the first time he had been back since he was hazed. Ava was filled with anxiety again, but reports that "he did well and I'm very proud of him." Everett says, "I felt like I needed to prove to myself that I could go back there. I wanted to take my anger out on them out on the field. I wanted to feel better about myself and show out in those games because of everything that happened and that's what I did."

Ava and Everett connected with the Gordie Center when Jill saw a video of Ava speaking at a school board meeting, was impressed with her advocacy for her son, and reached out to offer the Gordie Center's support. "While my son's experience was deeply traumatic, I find perspective in knowing that families like Gordie's have faced an even greater tragedy, losing their child to hazing," Ava says. "Their loss serves as a powerful reminder of why this work is so critical, and it motivates me to support efforts that ensure no other family has to endure such heartbreak." When Everett was hazed, Ava considered asking the military for a transfer out of Florida, but she decided that if she didn't stay and fight for her son, the culture would never get better — instead of moving, she's running for a position on the school board. "The handling of Everett's situation was the catalyst for my decision to run. I want to make sure that students are safe, parents are informed, and schools are held accountable for creating a positive and supportive environment for all children."

It has been a long year for Ava and Everett, and they want to share their experience to help other families. There's a misperception that hazing only happens to college students, but a national study conducted in 2008 found that 47% of college students experienced hazing in high school, often in organized sports. Everett says, "It's important to continue to share my story because there might be other people like



Everett's high school football photo.

me that are going through what I experienced but they are afraid to speak up. Maybe after hearing my story, they might want to speak up for themselves." Ava feels the same: "This experience has pushed me to become a mentor, get more involved in the school district, and work toward making meaningful changes for others. If sharing our experience can prevent just one child from suffering, then it's worth telling." Ava's message to parents is: "Talk to your kids about hazing before they join any team or group. Make sure they understand that it's never okay to stay silent if something feels wrong. Be vigilant, ask questions, and trust your gut if you feel something is off. Don't be afraid to speak up and advocate for your children and demand transparency and accountability from schools." Everett also believes that parents need to talk to their kids about hazing and ask questions, and he has a message for students, too: "Hazing is not a joke. You need to be on the lookout for it, especially in high school because it could happen to anybody. It's ok to ask questions and if you don't feel comfortable with something, it's ok to say something." ❀

"If sharing our experience can prevent just one child from suffering, then it's worth telling."



Everett and his mother Ava.

Hazing Consequences

Alasdair Russell

09/10/1997 – 04/01/2017

Alasdair Russell was a bright, athletic, and charismatic 19-year-old from Kent, England. Growing up the middle of three children, Alasdair loved the outdoors, especially rowing and climbing. At age four, he started rock climbing, and by age 17, Alasdair had already climbed three mountains over 19,000 feet (Mera Peak, Aconcagua, and Alpamayo). His mother, Kathleen Sheridan Russell, describes him as a driven, determined child. “Alasdair was a dreamer, very artistic, and funny. He loved life and he really liked pushing himself,” Kathleen says. At the time of his death, Alasdair was weeks away from attempting to break a world record as the youngest British climber to do a rapid ascent to Everest, a quest which Kathleen described as the driving force in his life. Alasdair used the media attention that he gained from his climbs to raise awareness about male cancers, since he had lost his beloved cousin to the disease. In addition to climbing, Alasdair loved to row and was selected for the British Start rowing program, which trains rowers for international competitions such as the Olympics. He chose to attend the University of Southern California (USC) with aspirations of becoming an actor, majoring in cinematography, and to row for USC.

The day Alasdair landed in Los Angeles to start his freshman year, he was spotted and

signed by a modeling agency. Three months later, he had appeared in numerous print ads and a Gap commercial with Naomi Campbell. In his first semester at USC, Alasdair enthusiastically joined a fraternity with the hope of making lifelong friends and alumni connections, but the new member process was not what he expected.

“Alasdair was a dreamer, very artistic, and funny.”

While pledging the fraternity, Alasdair was subjected to months of demeaning pledge tasks, sleepless nights, and basement lineups. Only weeks before being initiated, Alasdair sustained a serious head injury at a fraternity event which went untreated and unreported. Although he complained of headaches, rather than resting and following recommended concussion protocol, Alasdair continued to engage in long hours of pledge activities while also trying to keep up with his studies, Everest climb training, and modeling. In November, Alasdair was initiated into the fraternity. When he returned home for the winter break in December, Alasdair was a changed young man — he was almost completely unrecognizable to his family and friends. Kathleen says, “He was behaving aggressively and irrationally, had failed a class, was rarely exercising, and ignored

Left: Alasdair Russell — a model and aspiring actor.

his beloved dog, Obi.” Because of his fraught condition, Alasdair took the spring semester off, which unfortunately did not help — on April 1, 2017, Alasdair died by suicide.

Alasdair’s family was heartbroken and baffled. “How and why would someone who had all this going for him take his own life?” Kathleen wondered. Only after his death, searching through countless texts, photos, and emails on Alasdair’s phone, did his family discover the full extent of what happened to him during the fraternity’s new member process. Additionally, the symptoms of head injuries can be unbearable, particularly without proper medical care and support, which for Alasdair led to a devastating outcome.

To honor Alasdair and to raise awareness about the consequences of hazing, Kathleen produced the short film entitled *The Lonely Dog*, which is available on the Gordie Center’s website along with a discussion guide created in collaboration with Gordie Center staff. Kathleen says, “College life should be about expanding horizons, making friends, and having fun — not engaging in needless hazing activities that do not cement the bonds of friendship nor prove a commitment to an organization. Our film shows what can happen to young men like Alasdair. I want it to serve as a warning. Hazing has consequences and can happen to anyone. Let’s stop this brutal tradition of hazing and keep our students safe.” ❁

Stronger Together

Welcoming families and supporters for our annual reception

In October 2024, we hosted a reception for our supporters at UVA’s Student Health and Wellness building — the home of the Gordie Center! We welcomed members of Gordie’s family to Charlottesville, including his sister Lily DePeters and her family from New Canaan, Connecticut, his aunt Bambi Mauro and cousin Brooke Mauro from Washington, DC, and his mother and stepfather, Leslie and Michael Lanahan from Dallas, TX. Deborah Tipton, the mother of Robert Tipton, Jr., also traveled from her home in Memphis, TN, to attend.

The families, along with approximately 50 other guests, joined us to meet our staff, enjoy delicious food, tour our space, and hear remarks from UVA’s Vice President and Chief Student Affairs Officer, Kenyon Bonner. Kenyon shared his strong belief in the work of the Gordie Center and his appreciation for the families and supporters who make our work possible. Immediately following our reception, Susie and Jill joined the families in the President’s Box at the UVA football game. We enjoy this time with our supporters every year! ❁



The Lonely Dog

The Lonely Dog is a 15-minute film inspired by Alasdair Russell’s story and is intended to generate discussion about what constitutes hazing, why members feel so much pressure to participate, what makes it so difficult to challenge “tradition,” and how to take positive steps to make the new member process an authentic bonding experience. The Gordie Center collaborated with the Forever Forward Project (led by Alasdair’s mother and producer of the film, Kathleen Sheridan Russell) to create a discussion guide for the film. The film and discussion guide are available free for schools, families, and communities to use in their hazing prevention efforts. ❁



Request the free link to view/show *The Lonely Dog*.

Download *The Lonely Dog* Facilitation Guide.



Kathleen with director Jacob Seltzer and the sound crew.



Gordie Center staff with Gordie’s family and Deborah Tipton at our reception (from the left: Wyatt, Carl, Kristen, Max, Deborah, Jill, Susie, Leslie, Lily, Michael, John, Brooke, and Bambi).

Champion for Change

Robert Champion

07/13/1985 – 11/19/2011

Robert Darnell Champion was born on July 13, 1985, and grew up in the South Dekalb area of Decatur, GA, as the middle child and only son of Pam and Robert Gerald Champion. “Every time someone asks me who Robert was and what he was like, I close my eyes and take a deep breath,” Pam says. “I can see Robert’s innocent little face as a newborn in my arms when we first met. I can see his little fingers wrapping around mine.” Robert was an outgoing and friendly child who became passionate about music and the marching band at the age of 5, after witnessing a Christmas parade in downtown Atlanta. “His homemade drum major stick and band outfit were all he needed to perform in our driveway every moment he got,” Pam remembers fondly. Robert’s passion led him to become an accomplished musician, playing many instruments including the clarinet, keyboard, saxophone, and drums. He also grew into a great leader with a talent for convincing others that they, too, could share in the gift of music, dance, and performance. “Robert’s motto was ‘always do your best, and then just outdo yourself,’” Pam says. “He believed in the concept of leading by example and from the heart. In the band, he was known as ‘The Example, the one to imitate’ because he was serious about the music and performances, and he was also kind and compassionate.”

Robert’s high school marching band was highly prestigious, and in his junior year, the school was chosen as the setting for the fictional college in the movie “Drumline.” In addition to appearing in the movie, the director requested Robert to perform many of his dance routines so the movie’s actors could study and replicate them for the movie. Robert was filmed after school for weeks, often till midnight, to help the actors get his choreography just right. A photo of Robert marching with his high school band in the Rose Parade was featured in a music magazine, and he marched with his high school band at the Macy’s Thanksgiving Day Parade. “Robert, my son, was a remarkable young man,” Pam says with pride. Beyond his musical achievements, Robert was a beloved son, brother, friend, and mentor with an unwavering commitment to his values.

“Robert’s motto was ‘always do your best, and then just outdo yourself.’”

“Robert chose to attend Florida A&M University (FAMU) because of the influence of his high school band teachers. It also didn’t hurt that FAMU’s Marching 100 had a reputation as the best performance style marching band within Historically Black Colleges and Universities,” Pam explains.

Left: Robert Champion in his Florida A&M University Marching 100 band uniform.

Robert joined the band and embraced college life, hoping to graduate and return to his high school as band director someday. Robert would submit choreography ideas to the band staff for upcoming performances, and if props were needed for performances, he would stay up all night preparing them. Unbeknownst to Robert and his family, there was a history of violence in the band. In 2001, a Marching 100 band member was paddled so hard that he suffered kidney failure and was awarded \$1.8 million in a civil lawsuit. “Robert walked on the campus with his strong ethics, his beliefs, his commitment, his dedication, his determination, his love for music and people with his manner of servanthood. Robert’s primary focus was to fulfill his dreams in music education and share that love with all

he encountered along the way,” Pam shares. “Robert was quickly identified as someone who did things his way; a person who marched to his own beat. He was considered an outsider in an environment that was used to people conforming to the chaos. Robert was never meant to fit in or to conform to their standards. I can proudly say he never compromised on his ethics and standards.”

Robert rose to the position of drum major and was a stickler for following the rules and expecting others to do the same. He did not condone violence and counseled other band members that they did not have to participate when they were scared to go through with violent traditions. The band traveled to games and events on multiple chartered buses (assigned by instrument section), and

“Robert... never compromised on his ethics and standards.”

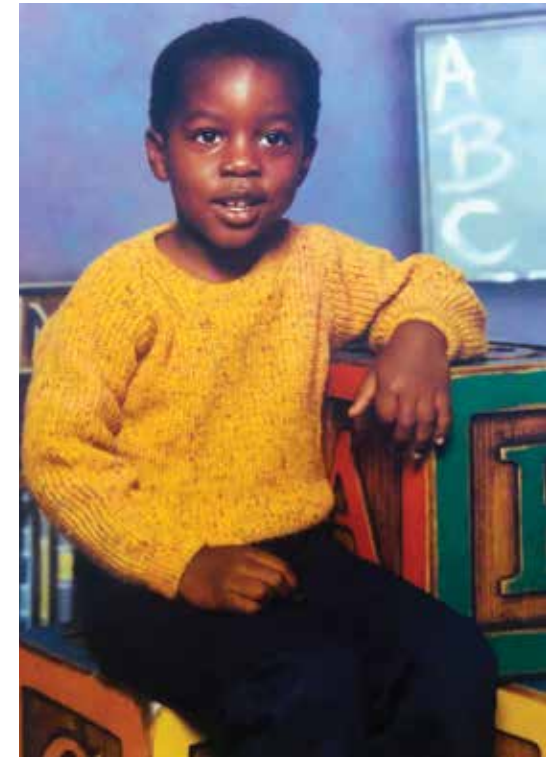


Robert at the beach in Oakland, CA, where he worked one summer during college.

the drummer’s bus, Bus C, was known for escalating violence among the members of the band. When Robert had previously been assigned to ride and monitor Bus C during travel, he shut the violence down, and some band members had issues with Robert trying to change the culture and traditions. Among those traditions was “Crossing Bus C,” where a band member must start at the front of the dark bus and make it down the center aisle to touch the back wall of the bus while other band members impede their progress by assaulting them from the seats. After the last football game of Robert’s junior year season, Robert was violently beaten, kicked, stomped, dragged, and punched while his arms were held behind his back. The blows he sustained were too much for his body to endure. On November 19, 2011, Robert was beaten to death on Bus C. For Pam, when she thinks about her son’s last moments, she struggles: “Just think of his emotional state, while enduring vicious violent attacks from the people he thought he knew. Now they were beating him to death and there was no escape.”

“The word ‘hazing’ diminishes the real crime that occurred.”

Robert’s younger sister, in college four states away, called Robert’s parents that night because she heard through friends at FAMU that something happened to Robert. Hours later, they got a call from the band director, who said Robert had collapsed on the bus on the way back to the hotel, but did not mention the violent hazing that had occurred. Pam remembers the confusion: “We had no idea what happened to Robert. The band director left us thinking that Robert collapsed for some unknown reason.” When the police were called to the scene, every band member had fled; Robert was found alone on the bus, badly beaten and bleeding internally. Robert’s family did not learn the truth of what happened to Robert until watching the



Robert as a toddler.

news in the days and weeks that followed, and the brutality of his death was confirmed by his autopsy. Although 15 members of the band were charged for their roles in Robert’s death, only one served jail time (despite 4 jury convictions for manslaughter, a judge gave 3 of the defendants probation). “I don’t get probation,” Pam counters. “I have to live with the fact that the justice system failed us; there was no justice. I’m going to die knowing they killed my child. Robert’s death wasn’t a loss, it was a robbery. I want the people who killed my son to understand that they took someone’s life. They don’t know the magnitude of what they have done. One of the defendants said in his trial, ‘I didn’t kill him — peer pressure did.’ Violence is violence — hazing is a nice fluffy word for covering it all up. The word ‘hazing’ diminishes the real crime that occurred.”

For Robert’s family, the devastation of his death hasn’t lessened with time, and they lean on their strong faith to sustain them. “There are no words that adequately express the hurt,

shock, and deep trauma,” Pam says. “There are unexpected triggers invading our space that show up out of nowhere. You never get past the hurt and the grief — it never goes away. You don’t get over it — you have no choice but to live with it.” The Champions continue to advocate for change, hoping to prevent other families from experiencing similar tragedies. They established the Robert D. Champion Drum Major for Change Foundation (beingachampion.org) shortly after his death, with a mission to disrupt and dismantle the culture of violence and hazing in educational institutions. The Champions are committed to ensuring that Robert’s legacy is one of advocacy, change, and the pursuit of justice. “I’d rather work for change than be pitied,” says Pam. “Robert empowered others with the strength to overcome and withstand the condoned violence within the band. He

worked hard against it, and we continue that work through his Foundation.” The Champions share Robert’s story to expose the fact that the violent behaviors of hazing exist in every facet of student life and not just in fraternity/sorority or athletic communities. “It is our belief that raising awareness coupled with changing mindsets will ultimately result in the prevention of senseless and needless injuries and deaths.” Pam has a message for students: “We want you to know that we all play a vital part in the solution here. No one has the right to pressure anyone to abandon your core ethics, values, and beliefs just to belong. Remember that you don’t have to compromise your greatness to belong. Your greatness comes when you take a stand. We are all CHAMPIONS whether we realize it or not.” ❀

HAZED: Shattered Trust

New film project inspires change through education

Over the last year, director Pete Schuermann and his team (who also created our documentary *HAZE*) created a 20-minute proof-of-concept film for our educational film project, *HAZED: Shattered Trust*. The funds for the proof-of-concept came from generous donors in our 2023 spring campaign, and we are tremendously grateful to all who supported the project, including the students, professionals, and families who participated in the filming. The proof-of-concept will be used to secure funding for the larger project — a series of episodes focused on understanding how hazing practices vary by group type, uncovering the mental health impacts of hazing, and empowering viewers with steps they can take in their own lives to end hazing.

We screened the proof-of-concept to students, staff, and community members at the University of Virginia during National Hazing Prevention Week in September and received helpful feedback for the project moving forward. Want to support *HAZED: Shattered Trust*? Email gordiecenter@virginia.edu to learn how you can help. **Were you or someone you know hazed? Send us an email sharing your story for possible inclusion in this project!** ❀



Actor Robin Wright introduced the *HAZE* documentary and returns for this new project.



Pete discussing the proof-of-concept with the audience at UVA's screening.



Robert and Pam Champion with Susie, Kristen, and Carl at the 2024 Hazing Prevention Institute.

Hazing Prevention Network Institute

Susie, Carl, and our graduate assistant Kristen traveled to Indianapolis in August for the Hazing Prevention Network’s annual Hazing Prevention Institute. Susie presented a keynote on hazing prevention in athletics, and Susie and Carl served as small group facilitators for the Institute. Kristen received a Harrison Kowiak Scholarship to travel and attend the Institute at no cost. Robert Champion’s parents, Pam and Robert, also attended the Institute, where Pam presented a keynote and shared Robert’s story. Susie, Carl, and Kristen enjoyed meeting Pam and Robert and learning more about their son. ❀

Request a link to view the proof-of-concept here!



Advice from Our Circle of Friends

Hazing Prevention Wisdom

Gordie had a huge circle of friends throughout his all-too-short life and never met a stranger. After his death only 3 weeks into his first year of college, Gordie's friends created "Circle of Trust" chapters across the county to educate their peers on the risks of alcohol overdose and hazing. As we recognize 20 years of Gordie's family and friends living without his big personality, we thought a fitting tribute would be to check in with our professional circle of trusted friends and ask for their best advice and wisdom. Below you will find insights earned from personal loss and from extensive research — from those with a few years of experience in hazing prevention to those with nearly 50. There's a hopeful tone in each of these quotes that we believe will inspire you to share them within your own network of family and friends.

Advice you would give to families (parents, grandparents, siblings, caregivers, others) around hazing prevention.



Drew Hunter

Past President of the Lambda Chi Alpha International Fraternity

"It is almost 2025, and we still have to talk about hazing.

It makes me both sad and angry to be honest. For families, discussions with your sons and daughters about hazing/ bullying can't start young enough. All family members — be they parents, grandparents, siblings, caregivers or others — need to be aware of problematic behaviors and address them consistently. Help instill in them values that neither tolerate hazing nor being hazed in any fashion. Teach them it is ok to walk away from uncomfortable situations and to alert responsible adults if hazing occurs."



Walter M. Kimbrough, Ph.D.

Interim President, Talladega College

"As an expert witness in over a dozen hazing cases, and now a parent of a college freshman, my advice to parents and relatives is simple: create space for honest conversations. Students who join groups want

to gain the interpersonal competence that comes with membership, as well as the sense of accomplishment. This can lead them to take unnecessary risks as they fear being labeled a snitch and becoming persona non grata on their campus. You have to remind them that you were with them before college and will be thereafter. They need to know they must tell you."



Courtney White, Ed.D.

President, Love Like Adam Foundation, cousin of hazing victim Adam Oakes (Virginia Commonwealth University, 2021)

"For families aiming to prevent hazing, it's important to stay informed and proactive. Start by having early conversations with your loved ones about hazing — what it is, its dangers, and how to recognize it. Research campus hazing policies and encourage bystander action, teaching your child to report or intervene safely. Stay involved in their activities, asking questions about group dynamics. Know the warning signs of hazing, such as emotional or physical changes, and intervene if needed. Advocate for stronger hazing prevention laws and education, and provide emotional support, including mental health resources, if your loved one is impacted."



Jason R. Kilmer, Ph.D.

Professor, Psychiatry & Behavioral Sciences, University of Washington School of Medicine, Adjunct Professor, Psychology, University of Washington

"I would advise families to be careful not to diminish the seriousness of a report of hazing by saying, 'well, things like that happened when I was in college' — your validation that something seems 'not ok' is huge to your student's comfort around reporting an incident, saying something to someone on campus, or seeking support if they need it."



Tracy Maxwell

Founder, Hazing Prevention Network

"My advice to families and new students is to ask a lot of questions and do some basic research prior to joining an organization or team. Have there been past hazing issues? Check media reports, disciplinary stats on the school's or other websites, and most of all ask upperclassmen, as they know the deal. Although most organizations and teams provide wonderful social, learning, and growth environments, some don't, so be sure you are joining the right one for you."



Jeanae Doughty

Associate Coordinator, Student Conduct Office, Texas A&M University

"I encourage families to maintain open dialogue with their students about their experiences and empower students to speak up if they feel uncomfortable or witness hazing. Encourage critical thinking about group traditions, practices, and values. In addition, be cautious of excessive or humiliating activities or activities that do not align with the mission and purpose of the organization. Reinforce the importance of standing up for themselves and emphasize that hazing is never acceptable. Organizations may tell students that hazing activities are optional, but that does not mean that hazing does not occur. Finally, familiarize yourself with the school's hazing policies and reporting procedures. Ensure your student understands what constitutes hazing, why it's harmful, and its long-term impacts on individuals, the organization, and the school community."



Todd Shelton

Executive Director, Hazing Prevention Network

“I encourage families to have conversations about hazing with their children — ideally before high school as students are experiencing hazing in high school and college. Hazing that involves alcohol endangers lives. I would make sure students understand how dangerous alcohol can be if they over consume and stress they must call 911 if they are ever in a situation where someone’s life could be in danger. If your child is new to a team or student group and you are seeing changes to their behavior or personality, ask questions. Follow up. If you suspect hazing, speak with school leadership or advisors.”

Something you wish you had known earlier about hazing and hazing prevention.



Hector Martinez

Father of hazing victim Sam Martinez (Washington State University, 2019)

“I wish I had asked more questions when my son was approached to join Alpha Tau Omega fraternity at Washington State University. I went to college in Mexico and had never heard of hazing before and didn’t understand the hidden dangers. We tried to look into ATO before Sam joined, but we didn’t find anything of concern, just positive things about Greek life, like community service opportunities and study tables. Too late, we learned ATO had a terrible track record of misconduct, including hazing. I feel like they lied to us and made sure this information was difficult to find. I don’t wish this on any other parent. You never get over the devastation of losing a child. That is why we created *hazinginfo.org*, so other families can find the information we lacked.”



Jennifer J. Waldron, Ph.D.

Professor, School of Applied Human Development, Bowling Green State University

“Like so many things, hazing prevention takes a village. It requires the community — family, friends, teachers, coaches, advisors, teammates — to build a culture of safety, support, and respect. It requires us to trust our gut. If something doesn’t feel right, it probably isn’t right. Finally, hazing prevention takes courage. Parents and guardians must be empowered to ask hard questions, while advisors and coaches must address behaviors, no matter how benign, that cause embarrassment. Peers must be willing to stand up against actions that don’t align with group values. Our village is strongest when we support and care for each other.”



Emily Perlow, Ph.D.

Assistant Vice President/Dean of Students, Worcester Polytechnic Institute

“I wish I would have known earlier in my career that hazing prevention must include two critical elements: it must 1) center student experiences and 2) build coalitions with unlikely stakeholders. Too often prevention efforts fail to embrace the ways students think about and experience hazing. We must ensure student voices are involved in crafting prevention focused solutions. Second, it is critical we invite naysayers to join the conversation. The stakeholders focused on maintaining the status quo and those focused on ending hazing may have shared objectives, but different ideas about how to achieve them. Often, when we engage in dialogue, we can find commonality and shared mission.”



Kyle McCoil

Assistant Dean of Students, Dean of Sophomores, Washington & Lee University

“Something I wish I had known earlier in my career is the history and prevalence of hazing. Hazing behaviors are far more complex than I once believed and effective prevention and intervention must take into consideration these intricacies. More importantly, I wish I had known that this work can feel never ending at times, so it’s important to remain focused on the big picture rather than expecting a change to occur in a short amount of time. Small wins in hazing prevention efforts are important because they lead to safer communities and organizations that no longer engage in hazing.”



Dirron D. Allen, Ed.D.

Associate Vice President for Student Life and Involvement, James Madison University

“I have met with families who lost a child due to hazing. In those conversations, I learned that the family had information that alcohol was rooted in their child’s student organization membership process. However, this information wasn’t shared with someone at the university. Campus administrators need to consistently reach out to families to educate them on what hazing is, how to share information about suspected hazing, and encourage reporting. It is critical that colleges partner with families and provide access to education and reporting methods in order to reduce the harm caused by hazing.”



Stevan J. Veldkamp, Ed.D.

Executive Director, Timothy J. Piazza Center for Fraternity and Sorority Research, Penn State University

“One important lesson I wish I had learned earlier in my career in hazing prevention is the significance of developing prevention curricula for in-person skill-building programs. It is crucial for facilitators to receive proper training, supervision, and feedback to enhance the delivery of the curriculum. Just like having the best medicine is not enough if it is not administered correctly, the effectiveness of hazing prevention programs relies on how well they are implemented and facilitated to ensure they are absorbed by the student body.”

Lessons learned in your work with students in hazing prevention.



Flavia Tomasello

Co-Founder, The Antonio Tsialas Leadership Foundation, mother of hazing victim Antonio Tsialas (Cornell University, 2019)

“After my oldest son Antonio’s tragic passing in a hazing incident, I realized the urgent need for change in the way young people understand leadership. Transforming the culture on campuses from a toxic power dynamic to a space where all members feel valued and heard became my mission. It is essential to reflect the compassion of those, like Antonio, whose voices were silenced too soon. I began working with my family, community, and national hazing prevention experts to develop ways to inspire a new generation of compassionate leaders with the courage to stand up for their values and use their power to serve others. Hazing cannot exist in an environment with compassionate leaders.”



Travis T. Apgar
*Vice President for Student Life,
 Case Western Reserve University;
 Board of Directors, Hazing
 Prevention Network; Anti-Hazing
 Activist and Speaker*

“It boils down to three important facts:

1. Most students do not support hazing practices but misperceive it to be the accepted norm.
2. When presented with opportunities to create meaningful unity building experiences for their team or group, they will genuinely engage.
3. Changing the culture of hazing comes from within the student community, but everyone can take action which will save a life.”



Mary Wilfert
*NCAA Associate Director for Health
 and Safety (retired)*

“It truly takes a team. Campus administrators have a duty to ensure campus safety. Though college athletics is going through dramatic changes, student-athletes are still part of that campus community. Athletics administrators benefit from collaboration with campus-wide hazing prevention efforts AND delivering athlete-specific programming. But real success in hazing prevention lies with engaging student-athletes in fully owning team success and honor, with a commitment to the safety of fellow students. Empowering them to create positive team traditions will instill pride in their student-athlete identity and pride in their role in the larger campus community!”



Gregory S. Parks, J.D., Ph.D.
*Professor of Law, Wake Forest
 University School of Law*

“Hazing isn’t simply about the attitudes, beliefs, and conduct of a handful of individuals — perpetrators or victims. It’s about all of us, directly and loosely connected to the perpetrators and victims. It’s about how people act in groups in ways that they wouldn’t if they were alone. It’s about how institutions and organizations function. Most critically, it’s about leadership — who gets to lead, what leaders know and believe, and what leaders have the wisdom and courage to do — what they’re capable of doing. If we start with this premise, we can see that we all play a role in the problem and solution.”



Hank Nuwer
*Journalist and author, creator of the
 Hank Nuwer Unofficial Hazing Deaths
 Clearinghouse*

“One of the more unfortunate outcomes of athletic hazing is that the victim is viewed as a weakling for failing to measure up to the status quo and enduring the hazing that all or most veterans had experienced. Worse, the victim gets vilified for hazing. Time and again, the hazing victim quits a team, and in many cases transfers to get a fresh start at another school. Hazing prevention in collegiate and high school sports lags well behind hazing prevention efforts in Greek life. It’s time for a change for the better.”



Victoria Valdez
*National President, Delta Xi Nu
 Multicultural Sorority, Inc.*

“Open, transparent, and nonjudgmental communication is not just a solution; it’s a crucial responsibility we all share in combating hazing. It’s not just about the victim or the

perpetrator; it’s about all of us. We must abolish fear and do what is correct and not just when it comes to hazing activity. Fear of not being accepted by others, not being initiated into whatever organization, and fear of the unknown should not be barriers to open communication. When we sense something isn’t correct, we should talk to someone, or if we see strange activity, we should look deeper into the situation immediately. It’s better to overreact than to sit back and allow hazing to continue. We cannot lose any more lives to this senseless crime.”



Elizabeth J. Allan, Ph.D.
*Principal, Stop Hazing; Professor and
 Program Coordinator, Higher Education,
 University of Maine*

“Students are change agents and can be powerful partners in hazing prevention. From my earliest experiences as a campus professional working on hazing prevention, students affiliated with different types of groups (e.g., fraternities, sororities, athletic teams, academic clubs) were at the center of these efforts as leaders, sharing their stories and advocating for change. Involvement in hazing prevention provides a tremendous opportunity for personal growth and leadership development as students use their voices to question harmful norms and traditions, disrupt abusive power dynamics, and build confidence knowing they contributed to building a healthier community.”

Thank you to all the contributors for their commitment to creating healthier student communities where everyone is valued, can be their authentic selves, and find belonging without enduring any form of hazing. A special thank you to Dr. Jason Kilmer for inspiring this article by his “With a Little Help from My Friends: Advice and Lessons Learned around Alcohol Prevention” in the 2018 issue of Perspectives: A publication for the members of the Association of Fraternity/Sorority Advisors. ✨



ROBERT TIPTON, JR.
 02/10/1990 – 03/26/2012

Remembering Robert

Deborah Tipton and her friend Christina Scott joined us in October for our annual reception, and we enjoyed a lovely brunch with them the following day. Deborah established the Robert Tipton, Jr. Hazing Prevention Fund at the Gordie Center to transform her family’s tragedy into a force for good. Robert’s Fund enhances our national hazing prevention efforts, with donations made in Robert’s memory providing lifesaving education that gives students and families critical tools to recognize hazing and speak out against it. Learn more about Robert and support his Fund at gordie.org/robert-tipton. ✨



Carl, Christina Scott, Deborah Tipton, Jill, and Susie.

APPLE Athletics

Promoting student-athlete wellness and substance misuse prevention

The Gordie Center's Athletic Prevention Programming and Leadership Education (APPLE) Training Institutes are the nation's premier event for substance misuse prevention and health promotion in collegiate athletics. Over the course of a weekend, campus teams of student-athletes and administrators learn about our comprehensive APPLE model through engaging, team-based sessions, which guide them in creating a substance misuse prevention action plan unique to their athletics department. Each school receives follow-up coaching to help their action plan be successful. Since 1992, over 60% of all NCAA-member institutions have attended at least one APPLE Training Institute.

This spring, we hosted three APPLE Training Institutes for 291 student-athletes and administrators representing 53 institutions.

- Charlottesville, VA
- Newport Beach, CA
- Orlando, FL (NCAA Division II schools only)

A core value of the APPLE Training Institute is a commitment to assessment. Over the past 30 years, the APPLE Training Institute has proven the model benefits student-athletes and administrators in promoting student-athlete wellness, preventing substance misuse, and creating campus change. ✨



The campus team from Oregon State University attending APPLE in Newport Beach, CA.



Student-athletes using water to learn how much alcohol is in a standard drink.



APPLE staff members Jill, Max, Joe, Susie, and Sophie.

Here's what our participants had to say:

- 100% of team contacts said they would recommend the APPLE Training Institute to others.
- 98% of APPLE participants rated the weekend as "good" or "excellent."
- 91% of team contacts reported that the APPLE weekend and follow-up meetings had an impact on their personal behavior, actions, and attitudes.
- 90% of schools rated alcohol misuse as one of their top five student-athlete concerns.
- 86% of schools are using at least one method to assess the impact of their action plans.

"I thought the curriculum was great because it wasn't about saying 'no,' but how can we make it more safe for ourselves and others."
— Student-athlete

"Y'all are becoming the baseline of our prevention efforts. The information and encouragement you provide carries us year after year and we are getting stronger and stronger because of APPLE Training. Tysm!!!"
— Administrator

"It has brought some excitement back to me as a professional. I feel more empowered to help our students and make actual change. I have been feeling a bit stagnant professionally, and this has renewed my energy."
— Administrator

"Everything was amazing to experience! The entire trip was well worth it and I plan to help change the negative culture at our school."
— Student-athlete

YOU MAKE IT HAPPEN!

Thank you! The Gordie Center is here, reaching thousands of students with lifesaving education, because of dedicated supporters like you. We're thrilled to showcase this year's 192 donors, listed by their total years of giving since 2010. Whether you're one of our 67 new donors this year or have been donating to the Gordie Center for over a decade, we appreciate you! Want to join this impactful group and see your name here next year? Donate today! ✨

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We love our supporters, and wanted to give a shout-out to Ann and Jeff Gonya this year! Jeff is a double Hoo (having earned 2 degrees from UVA — undergraduate in 1983 and UVA Law in 1986), and their daughter is a 2013 UVA graduate. Ann and Jeff live in Keswick, VA, and have donated to the Gordie Center since 2011!

“We support the Gordie Center because we have witnessed the devastating impact of binge drinking on college age students and their families. The Gordie Center is helping to save lives at UVA and other college campuses.”
—Ann and Jeff Gonya

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Gordie Center's Robert Tipton, Jr. Hazing Prevention Fund

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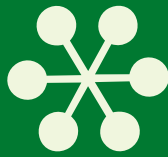
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GORDIE CENTER

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Gordie Center

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