UC SANTA BARBARA
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‘We Are All UCSB’

With a focus on remembrance, reflection and healing, the UC Santa Barbara community is holding several events to mark the one-year anniversary of the 2014 tragedy in Isla Vista that claimed the lives of six students and injured many others.

A community planting, a memorial lighting installation, a candlelight vigil, a public discussion and a paddle-out are among the things set for various dates throughout the month. A concert, an open mic night and a special exhibition of artifacts from the UCSB Library are also planned.

“The first-year anniversary of a tragedy is so important as a time to reflect on what happened,” said Kum-Kum Bhavnani, a professor of sociology at UCSB and chair of the Academic Senate. “These events are a means of honoring the people who lost their lives and of respecting those who were injured. And through that honoring and respect, I think, as a campus, we will heal more.”

The candlelight vigil will serve as an emotional anchor to the events. An effort of Associated Students (AS), who have taken on a leadership role in all the remembrance planning, the vigil will be held on Saturday, May 23, beginning at 7:30 p.m. Starting at Storke Plaza, participants will then traverse across campus, continue through the Pardall Tunnel and into Isla Vista. The walk will end with an open mic session at People’s Park.

“We hope this won’t necessarily be somber, but that it will give that feeling of community — the solidarity is what we’re trying to convey the most,” said

graduating senior Benjamin Simons, commissioner of the AS Program Board. “We want to make it as positive as possible because we’ve come a long way. So many things have happened and the community and the university have taken action.

“We went through something together,” Simons added. “And now we need to build community together, because we are all UCSB.”

As vigil participants make the stroll to Isla Vista, their handheld candles will have some accompaniment from a new light installation being designed expressly for the occasion. Inspired by UCSB art professor Kim Yasuda, the interdisciplinary endeavor was created and designed by Yasuda and Marcos Novak of the Media Arts and Technology program, and sponsored by UCSB’s Academic Senate, among others.

Starting in mid-May, the installation, “Hesperus is Phosphorus: Light Passages,” will feature solar-powered lights illuminating the trees and populating the grass verges along the main campus walkway to Isla Vista. A motion-activated lighting system will illuminate the Pardall tunnel. Envisioned as a series of art exhibits, the light galleries created through this project are meant to become permanent features of the campus.

“For me the most crucial thing is how do we look forward while recognizing and acknowledging the anniversary of something so painful and tragic,” said Yasuda. “I felt that the bringing of light into Isla Vista was critical, and the whole idea of light, symbolically, as a healing concept. What we envision for the vigil is a river of light coming through the campus and into Isla Vista, a light bridge that connects the campus to the community and demonstrates that we can come together in very visible solidarity.”

It’s a solidarity that will also be reflected — permanently — in a memorial garden one year in the making. Conceived by a UCSB alumnus shortly after the tragedy, the Isla Vista Love & Remembrance Garden at People’s Park was realized through collaboration between local businesses, the university, Isla Vista Recreation and Parks District and community members on and off campus. Serving as the garden’s focal point are six commemorative benches, meant to honor the six students whose lives were lost, designed by UCSB art students from Yasuda’s Isla Vista Open Lab class.

A community event on Saturday, May 9, at 10 a.m., invites the public to help plant native trees, shrubs and flowers in the newly created garden. The site will be

officially dedicated with a public ceremony on the following Saturday, May 16, at 2 p.m.

“The garden is a really beautiful gesture,” said Debbie Fleming, senior associate dean for student life at UCSB. “Even symbolically — it’s community, it’s faculty, it’s staff, it’s alumni, it’s UCSB students — all using their ingenuity and creativity to memorialize the students we lost in a way that fits Isla Vista.”

In addition to the light installation, another prominent remembrance on campus is a memorial exhibit being sponsored by the library and mounted at the Red Barn, or old gym, near the bus loop. Spearheaded by graduate student Melissa Barthelemy, “We Remember Them: Acts of Love and Compassion in Isla Vista,” will feature photographs of planned and unplanned memorials, artifacts and messages left at spontaneous memorial sites and documentation of support from around the globe. Barthelemy is curating the show from a collection based at the UCSB Library.

The exhibition is meant to remember those who died and were injured, and to tell the story of a community empowered by its own humanity in reacting to a collective loss. Opening May 20 and running through June 20, it can be viewed Wednesdays through Saturdays, from 3–7 p.m. Over commencement weekend, on Saturday, June 13 and on Sunday, June 14, it will be open from 1–5 p.m.

For information about, or to connect with, ongoing counseling resources at UCSB, visit Counseling and Psychological Services' Pathways to Healing.

About UC Santa Barbara

The University of California, Santa Barbara is a leading research institution that also provides a comprehensive liberal arts learning experience. Our academic community of faculty, students, and staff is characterized by a culture of interdisciplinary collaboration that is responsive to the needs of our multicultural and global society. All of this takes place within a living and learning environment like no other, as we draw inspiration from the beauty and resources of our extraordinary location at the edge of the Pacific Ocean.