

*\*This was a featured article in the Arts & Entertainment section of The Signpost – Weber State University newspaper. I received “Best Correspondence Writer” award for this article.*

## **‘Adrian Fest’ remembrance concert**

**Early college student at WSU is remembered with a 20-performance benefit concert**

*By Connie Scott – Correspondent | The Signpost*

An early enrollment student at Weber State University, Adrian Maxson was concerned with social justice in the United States and abroad. On April 3, 2007, Adrian attended an Amnesty International event on campus. As he crossed Harrison Boulevard, he dropped his glasses and went back to pick them up. That is when his life ended. A car hit him.

Adrian’s 18 years of life will be celebrated on April 4, 2008, at 7:30 p.m. in the Val A. Browning Center Austad Auditorium.

“‘Concert for Adrian’ or ‘Adrian Fest,’ as I like to call it,” said Mark Maxson, Adrian’s father and WSU performing arts multimedia specialist, “will be a night celebrating the things Adrian loved: music and social justice.”

To honor his son, Mark created the “Adrian Maxson Scholarship for Social Justice.” Many of Adrian’s classmates, as well as WSU faculty have already donated to this scholarship. At the end of the concert, the scholarship will be awarded for the first time. Money donated throughout the night and collected from yearly events will go toward future scholarship awards.

While the event is a benefit concert, Mark Maxson said he hopes it will be more than that. He said is his desire that those who attend will be challenged to get involved and become more informed in ways they can positively impact the community.

“There will be representatives from Amnesty International, STAND [a student anti-genocide coalition], Pi Sigma Alpha, the Political Science Honor Society which will have voter registration materials, and Focus the Nation, the campus environmental group,” said Nancy Haanstad, WSU associate professor of political science and WSU Amnesty International advisor. “This collection seems to be a good representation of the social justice issues Adrian was committed to achieving.”

Mark said he has been overwhelmed by the support he has received for this event. Friends and family members alike have offered their talents and will perform. Many Browning center faculty and staff have volunteered their time and talents for “Concert for Adrian.”

Adrian Maxson also enjoyed various types of music and the arts; with that in mind, his father designed a unique experience. Twenty different performances will fill the night, ranging from

classical music to rock-n-roll, contemporary Christian music to Flogging Molly tunes, dancing, multimedia, bagpipes, and protest songs. Many of the performances that evening will be original works, some created specifically for this event.

Andy Melvin, Mark Maxson's friend, will start the evening with an original song played on bagpipes called "Adrian's Song." Melvin will be flying in from Scotland.

"Andy certainly wins the contest for traveling the farthest," said Mark Maxson. "When he heard about the scholarship and the concert, he asked if he could be a part of the night, even though he knew we could not afford to fly him here to play one song."

"Tragedy and adversity make people want to help," said Erik Stern, WSU Performing Arts professor and one of the evening's performers.

"JeBu," a local band, will perform a three-song set during the evening. The group consists of Jed Keipp, singer, songwriter, and guitarist; Billy Bommer on alto saxophone; Josh Olsen, playing bass, and Paul Lovelady on the drums.

"I didn't ever get the chance to meet Adrian," Keipp said, "but I know Mark very well. We've played various gigs together and actually, he gave me my first guitar lesson. Mark and his family have always been very good to me and I wanted to return the favor."

The big finale, Maxson said, will be performances of his favorite songs.

"I know that if Adrian and I could have sat down and discussed protest songs," He said, "I think he would have liked these songs too."

There may be no rhyme or reason for a life cut short due to accidental circumstances, but according to Mark Maxson, his son Adrian lived life. He embraced the ambiguity, trusting that he could leave his mark in this world.