

Uars slowly arrive in the west parking lot as former and current students, faculty, family and friends gather right outside of the Upper Gym Lobby. The dark sky brightens from the soft light of candles flickering in the night. Heads bow down in prayer as the crowd remembers a fallen Warrior.

The Fallen Warrior Memorial Garden was created in 2011 in remembrance of students who have passed away during their time at school or less than ten years after they graduated. It began when former student Marine Staff Sergeant Jeremy Smith and U.S. Navy Seal Chief Petty Officer Stephen “Matt” Mills were killed in action. Since then, two candlelight vigils have been held in the garden, one for Mr. Daniel Regalado and one for senior Carl Wilson, both within one year of each other.

“At Mr. Regalado’s vigil, there were hundreds of former students who had come home from all over the country after hearing word that he had passed away, and at least 200 students were in attendance of Carl’s vigil,” senior Kaitlyn Larkin said. “This new tradition of having vigils for our fallen brothers and sisters is amazing because it reinforces the idea of ‘once a Warrior, always a Warrior.’”

Many people who did not know these fallen Warriors came to support their friends and other members of the school.

“Although I didn’t know Carl personally, I came to pay my respects,” junior Treven Theus said. “It really hit home for all of the people that I am close to, and I wanted to be there to support them. I think the candlelight vigils really bring us all together as one. Any differences that people have towards each other are set aside because we’re all one as Warriors.”

Much of the faculty and staff came to remember Mr. Regalado’s and Wilson’s lives.

“At the vigil, there were teachers and coaches and students and janitors there to recognize the lives of the ones we have lost,” Leadership teacher Ms. Carolyn Powers said. “I think it’s important for the kids to understand that this didn’t only affect them. It affected the principal and staff.”

The atmosphere of the two vigils influenced how students dealt with death.

“Mr. Regalado’s vigil was solemn yet happy,” junior Grayson Glass said. “Instead of being sad, we reflected on how Mr. Regalado impacted our lives. We knew we had just lost a great man and a great teacher, but we also remembered all of the amazing things we had learned and gained from him and his time with us.”

Students said they found solace at the vigils, gaining and creating new friendships through the mournful experiences.

“When we come together, we grow our friendships and family,” senior Mahnoor Agha said. “I have made so many friends through these vigils. It’s a sad thing at first, but that one person brings so many people together which is incredible.” **by Annie Tran**