Dear West Virginia University Family:

Last night, our Mountaineer community gathered to observe a tragic anniversary — and to embrace our commitment to preventing future tragedies.

“Breathe, Nolan, Breathe” is a moving documentary about West Virginia University freshman Nolan Burch’s death five years ago. Nolan’s parents, TJ and Kim Burch, joined us for the event and the discussion that followed. With immense courage and generosity, they relived their family’s nightmare in hopes of sparing other families similar pain. I encourage you to set aside time to watch this powerful story.

Since 2014, our University has worked to create awareness and improve student safety. We have reformed Fraternity and Sorority Life and pursued a fundamental reset of our University’s culture — urging students to work smart and play smart.

Ultimately, we all bear responsibility for protecting each other. Perhaps the most heartbreaking aspect of Nolan’s death is that prompt medical attention could well have saved him. That is why we are spreading the word: No one should fear the consequences of calling for help.

According to West Virginia law and our Student Code of Conduct, students may not face prosecution for drug or alcohol violations reported during a medical emergency.

You can learn more about medical amnesty, our “Would You?” anti-hazing campaign and all aspects of safety and well-being at safety.wvu.edu. Would you accept the responsibility for saving a life? Would you help someone in need?

I believe all Mountaineers would say yes. Accountability to each other
is one of our core values. And by saying yes, we will pay the highest tribute to Nolan’s memory — preventing such a loss from devastating other families and friends.

E. Gordon Gee
President, West Virginia University

Watch the documentary

Watch the panel discussion