

Dental students, others remember fallen Chapel Hill peers with vigil

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
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Two Southern Illinois University Edwardsville dental students in Alton – Jasmine Abdullh and Maniir Gomaa – are trying to make those around the region aware of a tragedy that happened at Chapel Hill.

Recently, the two coordinated efforts at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville in memory of three American students shot to death at a residential complex of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. The three victims were identified as 23-year-old Deah Shaddy Barakat, his 21-year-old wife, Yusor Mohammad, and her sister, 19-year-old Razan Mohammad Abu-Salha, police said.

Chapel Hill police told local news outlets that Craig Stephen Hicks, 46, was arrested and charged with killing the three Muslim students.

The local students coordinated with the dean of the SIUE Dental School and the chancellor at SIUE about the event. The event was highly successful with several gathering on campus and expressing feelings of grief in front of one another.

“For us, it was a good feeling to be able to gather as a diverse community of students around in one place to reflect for a purpose of three students,” Abdullh said. “Although none of us knew them personally we could relate in one shape or form and all shared the same identity. My friend and I are dental students and are Muslim American students.”

Barakat was a dental student and his wife had been accepted in the dental program at UNC, the SIUE students said.

Abdullh said the three seemed to all be generous and humanistic beings, which made the tragedy even more profound.

“I don’t think realistically a parking dispute would be one to cause the murder of three individuals, especially at that young of age,” Gomaa said. “It was touching for me and Jasmine to see how supportive Southern Illinois University was in helping set up the vigil for the students. We felt like it was something we had to do.”

Both of the SIUE students agreed that from what they see it could have been anyone who the killer targeted.

Abdullh emphasized that love overcomes hate and the American population must realize that everyone shares similar goals regardless of where they come from and what they believe in.

“I hope this will be a catalyst for positive changes,” she said. “This was a horrific event and a lesson to end ignorance and hate.”

The students said two people were lost that could have been great in the dental profession.

“I was so heartbroken when I read about these students,” Abdullh said. “It is crazy how they can touch your life so much when you never met them, but all three of them were so outstanding.”



