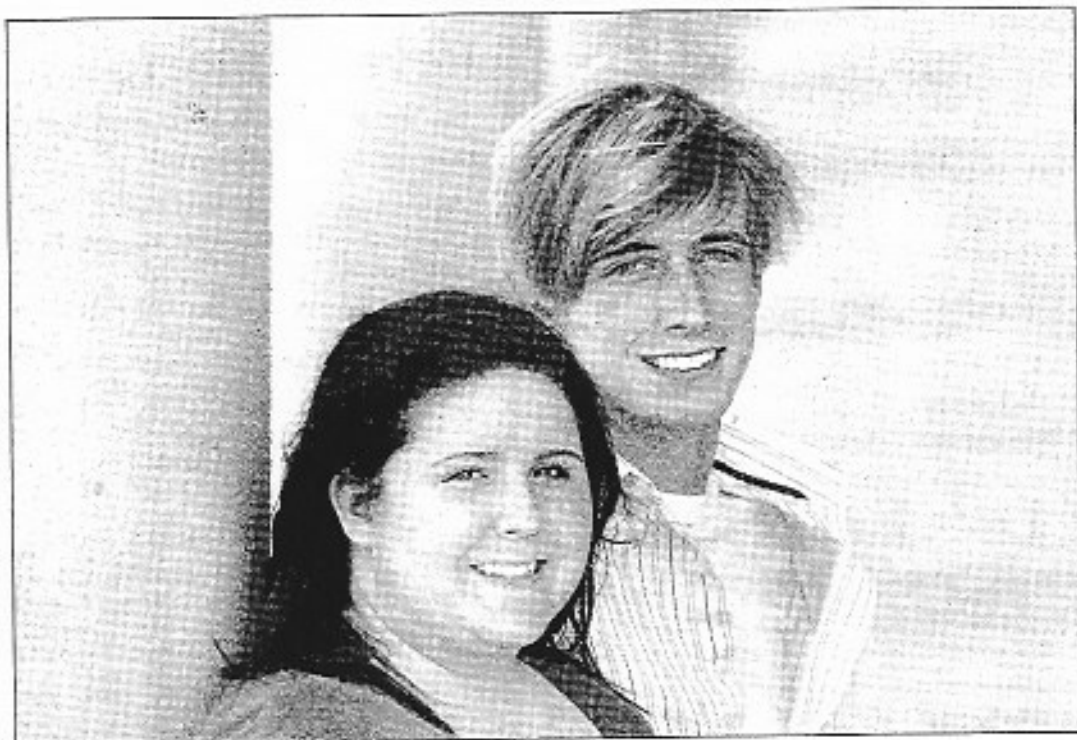


GRADS HELPING GRADS

Christian Brothers High School seniors Jessica Bryant and Daniel Cagley, both 17, led a fund drive that raised more than \$2,800 to help fund graduation ceremonies for 12th-graders in Greensburg, Kan., whose school was destroyed by a tornado May 4.

Sacramento Bee/
Florence Low



Seniors at Christian Brothers aid students of tornado-ravaged school.

By Edgar Sanchez
BEE STAFF WRITER

Final exams and graduation rehearsals are among the reasons 12th-graders are so busy during their final month in high school.

Seniors at Christian Brothers High School dealt with those traditional pressures but still found time to assist tornado victims in Greensburg, Kan.

After learning that most of Greensburg had been reduced to rubble by a May 4 tornado, two senior literature classes at Christian Brothers discussed how to help.

The Sacramento students were particularly concerned about the Class of 2007 at Greensburg High School. The tiny campus, like most of the buildings in the town of 1,800, was destroyed by the evening twister, which killed at least 10 people.

In the end, the literature students and other concerned classmates raised more than \$2,800 to help ensure that 25 Greensburg High School seniors could proceed with their commencement.

The fundraising demonstrated that local teens care about their peers in America's heartland, according to two

leaders of the drive. Part of the cash, both said, will help reimburse the Greensburg seniors for the cost of relocating their graduation.

"We wanted to make sure that the Greensburg students would have a graduation as good as ours," senior Daniel Cagley, 17, said last week.

"High school graduation is a turning point in all of our lives," he said, adding that every teenager deserves a memorable diploma ceremony.

Senior Jessica Bryant, 17, said her empathy for the victims motivated her to gather donations from fellow students, parents and others.

"I was just trying to put myself in the shoes of the Greensburg seniors," Bryant said. "I can't imagine being so close to graduation" and suddenly having no school.

The gift from Christian Brothers was "a wonderful, wonderful gesture," said Greg Soelter, a Rotary Club member from Ulysses, Kan., who is involved in coordinating donations for the Greensburg seniors.

Greensburg High School held an emotional graduation on May 19 on a golf course on the edge of town.

"Because there are no facilities left standing in town, other neighboring towns offered their gymnasiums for the graduation ceremony," Soelter said. "But the students wanted to graduate in their town."

More than 1,500 guests attended, sitting under tents on the golf course.

"It made sense to have it there, because the town is still basically shut down," Soelter said, noting that the Greensburg graduates are living in shelters or with relatives nearby.

"There were a lot of tears," he added, along with encouragement from the announcement that Greensburg High School will be rebuilt.

Some of the funds donated by Christian Brothers will go toward books at the new campus.

Christian Brothers High School held its graduation Friday at the Sacramento Memorial Auditorium. Hundreds of parents and friends applauded the 259 graduates, who wore royal blue caps and gowns.

Before the ceremony, Christian Brothers seniors issued a challenge, asking that the \$2,800 they raised be matched by local merchants, thereby doubling the amount for the Greensburg High graduates.

Checks should be made out to WRCF Tornado Fund, with tornado fund in the memo field. (WRCF means Wichita Rotary Charitable Fund). Checks should be mailed to Tornado Fund, Rotary District 5690, 106 West Douglas St., Suite 909, Wichita, Kan., 67202-3308

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