By Sheri Hink
The Wauneta Breeze

The life of one of Wauneta's shining stars was cut short Wednesday, April 25 when 20-year-old Cody Fanning died after falling from a moving pickup in Crete, where he was a junior at Doane College.

Fanning, a 2009 Wauneta-Palisade, graduate was a leader and outstanding athlete.

According to the Crete Police Department Fanning was standing in the bed of a pickup driven by Cody D. Barnes of Elwood, also a Doane College football student, and fell from the truck as it turned southbound from 13th street onto Iris Avenue in Crete, Neb.

The five other passengers in the pickup, one female and four males, placed Fanning into the pickup and transported him to the nearby Crete Area Medical Center. The Crete Police Department was notified at 3:19 a.m. and an officer arrived shortly.

The officer arrested Barnes for driving under the influence of alcohol and transported him to the Saline County Jail in Wilber, Neb. The Saline County Attorney has yet to determine what, if any, charges will be filed against Barnes.

Fanning was flown from the Crete Area Medical Center to BryanLGH Medical Center in Lincoln where he was pronounced dead.

Family and friends on both ends of the state are grieving after the tragic accident. Fanning is fondly remembered by all those he touched in his short time on earth.

His family remembers Fanning as a hard worker with an open heart who was quick to help others and who had a passion for football.

"It did not matter if someone was young or old, big or little, black or white, Cody had a big heart and was always ready to help someone in need," said his aunt, Shelly Meyer, and grandma Betty McCallum.

Fanning was active on his family farm and was running his own cattle as well. His family remembers him as a go-getter who was not afraid to go after any goal. Family members said, "He always gave 110 percent whether he was working or playing."

Leader On and Off the Field

Fanning was active on the Doane campus. Doane College head football coach Matt Franzen remembers Fanning as an amazing, and a bit surprising, addition to their team. Fanning joined the Doane team as a roster filler but he didn't stay there long. He went from being a seventh string weakside linebacker to a defensive scout team player by the second week of practice. He went on to play on special teams in every game of the season as a freshman.

Doane's defensive coordinator Chris Bessler also saw Fanning's determination to play college football. Bessler described Fanning as having an extremely hard work ethic, persistent, great character and very dependable.

Franzen said that Fanning topped the coaching staff's list as the toughest, scrappiest and most loyal player on the roster, describing him as a "5' 6" stick of dynamite."

Coach Franzen said that Fanning set the standard of performance and personal characteristics to instill in all players and coaches.

"Cody didn't do anything half way. If he wasn't the best at everything he did, he surely gave his

best in everything he did. Cody was a GPAC Scholar Athlete who carried a 3.3 GPA in Business Administration," said Franzen.

Fanning was well-loved off the field as well. His death was mourned throughout the Doane campus as the news of his death swept across campus.

"This is heartbreaking news for Cody's family and the Doane community. We extend our deepest sympathy to the family and all who are grieving," said Doane President Jacque Carter.

Sorely Missed Back Home

Several faculty members at Wauneta-Palisade schools remember Fanning as a leader and integral part of the W-P community.

Dawn Doetker, W-P track coach, said, "Cody was a hard-working, devoted and loyal young man. No matter what sport, studies or other activities he participated in he gave more than a 110 percent effort."

"Cody never complained. He just went out and did the workout and gave it his all. On the track team, Cody tied the 100 meter record and was so proud of what he had accomplished. He never had enemies and was loved by all," added Doetker.

Fanning was also a state-level leader away from the field of competition during his high school career. "Cody was in ag and wood shop classes. He was also a member of the FFA chapter and earned his state degree in 2009. Cody was more interested in the hands-on activities of the shop. His personality, along with T.J. Ellicott, always kept the classes lively," said W-P ag teacher and FFA sponsor Dan Andrews.

Randy Geier was principal of W-P High School the year Fanning graduated. "Cody was an amazing young man in so many ways. He was an excellent student who always had a smile on his face. As his school principal I appreciated his positive attitude. He would always make me smile. Cody was also an excellent leader for the school and football team—he was always willing to help somebody out."

Legacy Lives On

Fanning continues his leadership and inspiration to others after his death. He will continue to help others through the donation of his organs.

Fanning is the son of Craig and Jo Fanning of Wauneta and older brother of Bo and Abbie Fanning. His grandparents are Clint and Betty McCallum and Dorothea Fanning.

Funeral services for Fanning were held May 1 at the Wauneta Attendance Center gymnasium.

Per the family's request, W-P students dressed casually in W-P colors or shirts with Fanning's football number. Members of the Doane football team wore their black jerseys to the service.

Though lost too soon, Fanning made the most of his time, perhaps best summed up by Coach Franzen, "Cody Fanning got more out of his 20 years than many people get out of their entire lifetime. He was a friend, a teammate, a nephew, a cousin, a boyfriend, a grandson, a brother and a son. I feel blessed to have had three years with him, but I also feel cheated that I didn't get more." A feeling shared by many.