Transgender lives remembered in touching ceremony

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Note: Marianne Rampertab is a Campus Correspondent for the Daily Campus.

Students and faculty gathered on the University of Connecticut's Student Union Terrace for a Transgender Day of Remembrance ceremony hosted by the Rainbow Center on Wednesday, Nov. 18.

The weather was calm and serene, making it a perfect night for the event.

Transgender Day of Remembrance was established in 1999 by transgender advocate Gwendolyn Ann Smith, according to Ian Shick, the assistant director of the Rainbow Center. Originally meant to honor Rita Hester, a transgender woman who was killed in 1998, the day has expanded since.

"The vigil commemorated all the transgender people lost to violence since Rita Hester's death and began an important tradition that has become the annual Transgender Day of Remembrance," Shick said.

While discussing the event's history, Shick presented a quote from Smith that defines the purpose of Transgender Day of Remembrance.

"Transgender Day of Remembrance seeks to highlight the losses we face due to anti transgender bigotry and violence," Smith's quote reads. "I am no stranger to the need to fight for our rights, and the right to simply exist is first and foremost. With so many seeking to erase transgender people sometimes in the most brutal ways possible, it is vitally important that those we lose are remembered and that those we continue to fight, that those we continue to fight for have justice."

Marianne Rampertab, a seventh-semester English and history student who works at the Rainbow Center as a coordinator for the Influencing Readiness, Inspiring Success Mentorship program, said the event is very important to the Rainbow Center and the UConn community.

"Trans students have often been unrecognized, harassed, targeted and often feel unsafe on campus," Rampertab said. "And we need to do a lot more to combat this ostracization. And I believe that this event and the Rainbow Center are great starts."

Shick recognized that events like the Transgender Day of Remembrance ceremony can be difficult for some people to come to.

"We recognize that either folks might not desire to come to an event like that or maybe the experience of violence has personally touched them," Shick said. "And so it can be hard to come to a vigil talking about the experiences of violence that the community faces."



A student holds a transgender flag on the Student Union terrace on Wed, Nov. 18th, 2026. The Rainbow Center hosted an event for Transgender Day of Remembrance, a day dedicated to honoring the trans people that have died due to anti-trans violence.

PHOTO BY MICHAEL JEFFERS, GRAB PHOTOGRAPHER/THE DAILY CAMPUS



The Rainbow Center at UConn, in the Student Union. The Rainbow Center works to advocate for and increase education, access, retention, identity development, and community-building for queer- and trans-spectrum communities.

FILE PHOTO/THE DAILY CAMPUS

Despite this, a handful of students and faculty came.

At the beginning of the event, attendees were given candles and transgender flags. Afterwards, three people read the names and ages of every American transgender person who lost their lives as a result of anti-transgender violence between November 2025 and November 2026. There were 60 names read, with ages ranging from 16 to 79.

Reading their names was a way to remember them.

"Life is worth living when you have people who will remember you and carry your story onward," Shick said.

A moment of silence was held afterwards, letting attendees further honor the transgender people killed whose names are not publicly known.

"Even though we don't have a name to speak, we can still bring something into the world to recognize their passing," Shick said.

To conclude the event, everyone walked to the south end of the Student Union, where they planted their candles and 47 transgender flags into the lawn.

Bailey Gaffney, a third-semester master's student in higher education and student affairs student who is the Rainbow Center's graduate assistant, said this was their first time attending the event.

"It's a very solemn event, understandably," Gaffney said.

Gaffney said it's heartbreaking to think about those who lost their lives because of anti-transgender violence.

"When you're reading the names, we sometimes don't know their full name, or we don't know their age," Gaffney said. "And then there's others that we may not know because, as Ian was saying, they were never released in the paper. I think that's really heartbreaking, and I think they deserve to have a chance to be remembered."

The names of the transgender individuals who lost their lives between November 2025 and November 2026 can be found on Remembering Our Dead.

SUBOG HOSTS A NIGHT OF RECOGNIZABLE MUSIC BINGO AND TRIVIA

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Fans of pop music gathered for an evening of music bingo and trivia hosted by the Student Union Board of Governors on Wednesday, Nov. 18. The doors to the Student Union theater opened at 7 p.m. and students trickled in until 7:15 p.m., when the event started.

Upon entering, each student received up to two 5-by-5 square bingo boards that were filled with the names of popular artists. Attendees who completed a whole row, column or diagonal set of five won a $10 gift card for Dunkin'. Instead of calling out the names of popular artists, the projector played a 30-second clip of one of their songs and its corresponding music video.

There were four rounds of bingo, and no limit to how many students could win in each one. The first round focused on music from the 1990s, and each subsequent round progressed, ending with the 2020s. Every round showed 20 artists and a song they released in the decade.

Plenty of familiar favorites from the last 36 years appeared, like MC Hammer with "U Can't Touch This," Kendrick Lamar with "HUMBLE." and Harry Styles with "As It Was." But there were some one-hit wonders and indie picks that drew shouts of confusion from the audience, like Hanson with "MMMBop" and Modest Mouse with "Float On."



Fans of pop music gather for an evening of music bingo and trivia hosted by SUBOG on Wed, Nov. 18. The doors to the Student Union theater opened at 7 p.m. and students trickled in until 7:15 p.m., when the event started.

PHOTO BY MATHIEU PINTO, GRAB PHOTOGRAPHER/THE DAILY CAMPUS

Between each round, three students were picked to compete against each other in a musical trivia game. The first game, called "K-Pop or K-Not," presented the name of a real K-pop group and a name that was made up. The contestants were tasked with selecting the real group, with matchups like "Cignature" against "InkBloom" and "Hexapoo" against "Bug Aboo."

Lucas Finkel, a first-semester student majoring in design and technical theater, was one of the students picked for "K-Pop or Not," which he said was his favorite part of the event.

"I liked that in between the bingo sessions, [the host] had fun games and brought people to the stage to do different challenges," Finkel said.

Finkel said he didn't know much about K-pop, but he got a correct answer and won one of the $10 Dunkin' gift cards.

The second game, called "Follicle Follies," had the contestants identify an artist from a close-up picture of their hair. While the first round started easy with pictures of Billie Eillish's green roots and Ice Spice's ginger afro, the second round got harder with the hair of Lil Nas X and Karol G.

The last game, "Where in the World is Cardi B," had students identify what landmark a photoshopped rapper Cardi B stood next to. With unexpected yet obvious answers like the Eiffel Tower, the Titanic wreckage and Mars, each contestant got all the locations right. The game proceeded to a tiebreaker round, where students had to guess how many copies of Cardi B's 2025 album "Am I the Drama" sold in the U.S.

Destani Ogbanna, a seventh-semester student majoring in speech, language and hearing sciences, participated in the Cardi B game, but didn't end up winning the tiebreaker.

"I thought [the game] would be hard, but I actually got it after a while," Ogbanna said. "But I ended up losing because we had to do how many sold records that she had, and I was way off. She's so famous, so I assumed 20-something million."

Ogbanna said she enjoyed the bingo portion of the event as well, and that it was easy to determine what artist to mark on the board. Out of everything, she said the best part was "the environment and the connections."