

# The Elizabeth Wallace April 16th Pastels



In the wake of the April 16, 2007 shootings in West Ambler Johnston and Norris Halls, the university received over 90,000 artifacts and mementos, including recorded music, art, clothing, letters and notes, in an outpouring of public sympathy from people around the world. Among the most notable gifts was a complete set of pastel portraits of all 32 victims, donated by the California artist, Elizabeth Wallace. Ms. Wallace had never met any of the victims, or even visited Virginia Tech, but her artistic skill and personal empathy produced some of the most beautiful and moving artworks the university received. The original set of portraits were distributed to the loved ones of the victims, or stored for those who might want them at a later date. In the first set, each portrait included a brief excerpt from the biography of the student or faculty member, hand written with their image. An example from that set, of Caitlin Hammaren, is shown at right. Learning of the original pastels, President Steger commissioned Ms. Wallace to draw a second set of portraits, those displayed in this hallway. The portraits in this second set differ somewhat from the first, drawn without biographical excerpts, and a few depict the subject from a slightly different perspective, as comparing Caitlin's two portraits illustrates. There is no special order to their presentation here; they are simply arranged as symmetrically as their differing shapes and sizes allow. Wallace's work, which took several months of research and creation for each set, stands as a profound and generous example of the care and concern expressed for the victims, their loved ones, and the university community by unknown thousands of people around the world. We hope all of us emulate that same care and generosity in our interactions with others. Complete biographies for all 32 students and faculty can be found online at [www.weremember.vt.edu](http://www.weremember.vt.edu).

