

**Thank you to the Hinsdale County Search & Rescue Team and the people of Lake City:**

Ben Brownlee, our son, brother, grandson, nephew, cousin, and friend, died while hiking in the mountains near Lake City on October 3rd. He grew up in Dallas, Texas, graduated from Dallas Jesuit High School, ran track at the University of Kansas and then moved to Denver in 2016 to make his way. By 2020, Ben was a 26-year old commercial real estate broker with Transwestern; volunteer track coach at Regis Jesuit High School; and a newly minted trip leader for the Colorado Mountain Club. He loved being outdoors and he had a smile & encouraging word for everyone. Having climbed all of Colorado's 14'ers, he set a new goal to climb all the Centennial and Bi-Centennial Peaks which is what brought him to Hinsdale County with a plan to summit twelve 13'ers over the weekend. When Ben did not return on Sunday as planned, we frantically began a Search & Rescue attempt through the Sheriff's Department aided by numerous volunteers in the community as well as friends and family that came to his aid. Tragically, Ben had fallen attempting a Class 5 traverse and did not survive. After a two day search, he was spotted by Helicopter and the rescue attempt turned to recovery.



**(Left Photo)**  
Ben, with his girlfriend,  
Hannah Walters



**(Above Photo)** Siblings Heather,  
Ethan and Ben Brownlee.

On behalf of our family, we would like to thank you for your kindness to us while we were in Lake City searching for Ben. Thank you to the Sheriff's Department and search volunteers who risked their safety and gave their time, some staying up all night and/or forgoing their jobs to search for Ben. Thank you to Patrick Tubbs and Logan Rhodes who searched a dangerous rock slide - twice. Thank you to Hugh and Barbara Conway at North Face Lodge, who made sure we had dinner when things were shut down and shuffled reservations to make room for us. Thank you to Kay at The Sportsman, who loaned us binoculars and GPS units. Thank you to Monica at Castle Lakes Campground, who generously offered us gear for the search and lodging. Thank you to Jerry Johnson at the Climb, who made room for and nourished us on a busy night at the restaurant. Thank you to so many others who offered us help, words of encouragement and condolence. Please forgive any omissions but we'd like to specifically thank the following:

**From Hinsdale County:**  
County Commissioner Kristine Borchers  
Undersheriff Jordan Kaminski  
Deputy Charles Ferris  
Deputy Brennon Pantleo  
Bobbi McDonald  
Tom Carl  
EMS Director Buffy Witt  
EMT Rachel Moore  
Hinsdale County Search & Rescue team led by Mike Ralph, including  
Craig Blakemore  
Brant Cunningham  
Christian Hartman  
Richard Hurd  
Jerry Johnson  
Mabree McClung  
Peter Nesbitt  
Logan Rhodes  
Patrick Tubbs  
Wade Wandrey  
Coroner Jerry Gray  
Public Information Officer Sandy Hines  
Emergency Manager Phil Graham

**From Ouray County:**  
Tim Pasen  
**From La Plata County:**  
Tiffany Brainero  
Leo Lloyd  
**The Western State SAR in Gunnison including:**

Brandon Bashan  
Alexander Born  
Dominic Gavel  
Kyle Juszyk  
Dani Rudinsky  
Jayden Skelly  
Matt Ziegler  
**Colorado Fourteeners Initiative**  
**Brad McQueen**

**Mountain Blade Runners**  
**Helicopters**

**Colorado Search & Rescue, and**  
**Mountain Rescue Aspen**

To express our gratitude, we are launching the Ben Brownlee Memorial Fund through the Lake Fork Community Foundation to provide funds for equipment & training needs for Search & Rescue efforts in Hinsdale County and for the proposed Lake San Cristobal Park. [www.BenBrownleeMemorialFund.com](http://www.BenBrownleeMemorialFund.com)

*The town's kindness made our tragedy less difficult to bear and inspired us with the knowledge of how selfless and good former strangers can be.*

Thank you,

John Brownlee • Jennifer Brownlee  
Ethan Brownlee • Heather Brownlee  
Hannah Walters • Jeff Walters

