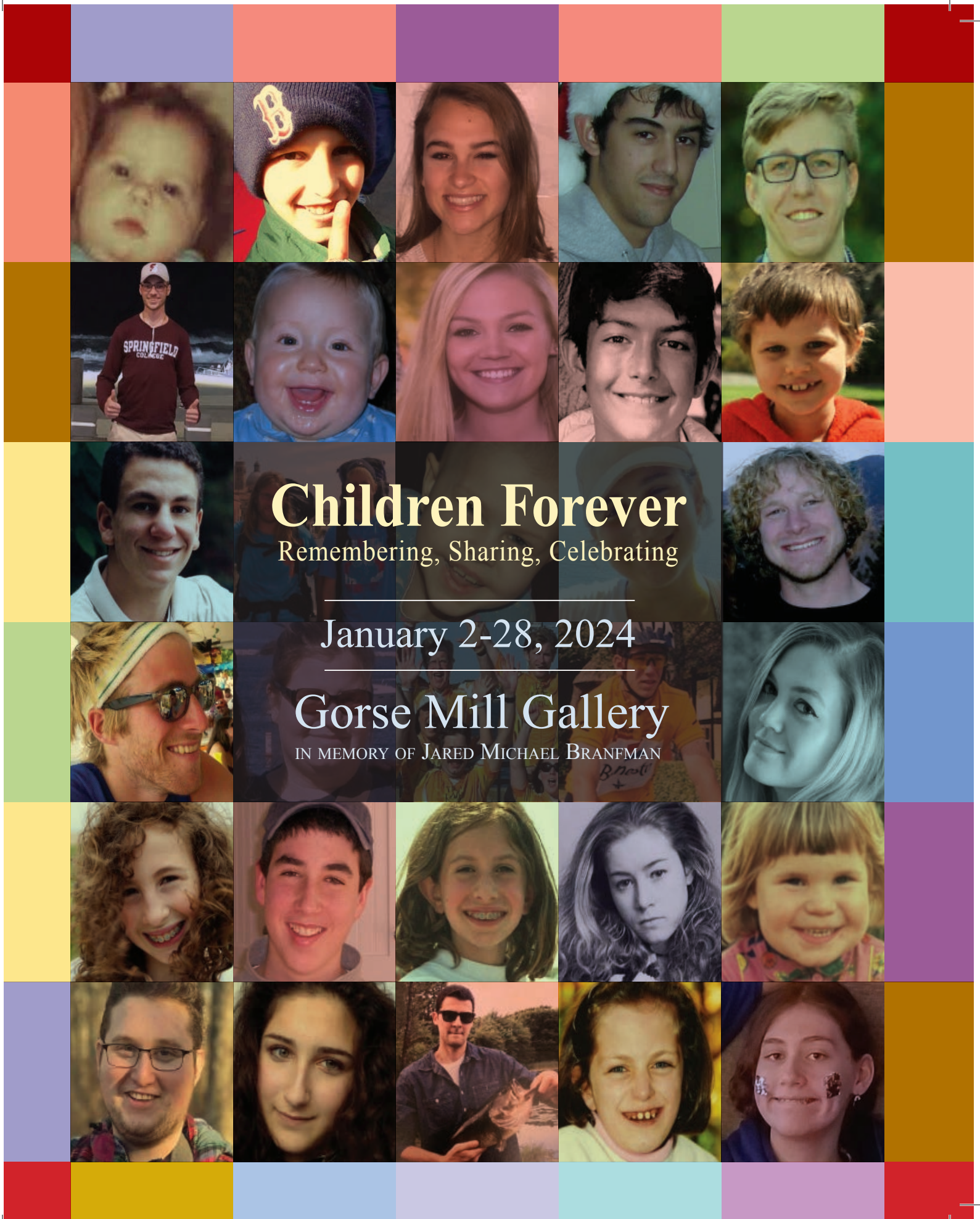

Children Forever
Remembering, Sharing, Celebrating
January 2-28, 2024
Gorse Mill Gallery
IN MEMORY OF JARED MICHAEL BRANFMAN

Children Forever

Remembering, Sharing, Celebrating

January 2-28, 2024

Gorse Mill Gallery

IN MEMORY OF JARED MICHAEL BRANFMAN

CHILDREN FOREVER, REMEMBERING, SHARING, CELEBRATING

IS DEDICATED TO THE MEN OF FATHERS FOREVER AND THE LEGACY OF OUR CHILDREN

ARNIE BEARAK / JORDAN

STEVEN BRANFMAN / JARED

DON CHASE / ERIC

MIKE CLAYMAN / MAX

CHRIS DOKTOR / JESSICA

DAVID DOMESHEK / NATASHA

IAN FELDBERG / TABITHA

JOHN FIELDSTEEL / KATE

JON FRANKEL / ADAM

PEDRO GARRIDO / ADRIENNE

DAVID GREENLEAF / JONATHAN

GEORGE GORMAN / ANNIE

TOM GORMAN / ERIN

CHARLES GOETZ / FIN

JOHN HUBBARD / SCARLETT

BOB KALISH / ZACH

DAVID KAPLAN / TOMMY

DAVID KAPLAN / JESSICA

MICHAEL KARDOK / MIKE JR

MIKE MANENTE / CHRISTOPHER

BOB NESHE / CONNOR

CRAIG NEWFIELD / TALIA

ERIK OWENS / NICHOLAS ALEXANDER

PAUL PAGANELLI / ALEX

TED PRICE / ADAM

PETE SERISKY / KIRA

HOWARD TEIBEL / DREW

RAJEEV TIPNIS / ANAYA TIPNIS

PATRICK TOBIN / JANELLE

JONATHAN WARBURG / JONATHAN

Children Forever: Remembering, Sharing, Celebrating
Curators Statement

My son Jared passed away from brain cancer in 2005. He was 23 years old. A year later I connected with Fathers Forever. Our club, one that no wants to be a member of, has been a critical component to me being able to incorporate what has happened, and to navigate through the labyrinth of day-to-day existence. Fathers Forever has changed my life.

But this exhibition is not about us. *Children Forever: Remembering, Sharing, Celebrating* is a celebration of our children. It is an opportunity to publicly share their lives, however short or long they were, with others.

As a clay artist and gallery director, I've had many exhibitions of my own work, have juried, and judged exhibitions, and have curated many shows. The idea for *Children Forever: Remembering, Sharing, Celebrating*, began to formulate in my mind a few years ago, and grew from one of the common themes that come up in our FF breakfasts; the fear that the memory of our children will fade over time. For those of us who have connected with avenues and venues that memorialize our children: park bench, tree, a garden, a scholarship, an athletic event, the establishment of a foundation, and other means of legacy, that fear is understood but thankfully not realized. My family is blessed with several public displays of Jared's legacy, among them, the Pan Mass Challenge, Livestrong Challenge, Thayer Academy Sculpture Garden, Jared's Sunflowers Fund at the Dana Farber Cancer Institute, the huge body of art that Jared produced, the name of the gallery that we stand in, and other material manifestations of Jared.

For others, that fear is real. As the Gorse Mill Gallery Director, I found myself in a position to be able to offer the opportunity to showcase our children in a unique way: through the art that they made and other objects that represent and describe them.

Some of the men latched onto this idea immediately and were enthusiastic about writing a description of their child and gathering items to exhibit. Others took pause, and after a period of thought, reflection, and contemplation, connected with the idea, and were able write descriptions and choose an object or two to exhibit. Others agreed to participate but found it excruciatingly painful to conjure up the words to describe their child in the way they wanted to share them as they went through boxes of photos and carefully handled objects that, in various ways represented their child. One father asked me "How do I write something that doesn't read like an obituary?" Some men dismissed the notion of an art exhibition telling me "But my child didn't do art." I replied; "Didn't do art? Think outside the box. Poetry, essay, letter, music, a school report card, a teacher's note or comment. Items that your child held close. A piece of art that was given to them as a gift. An object that they found on a hike, on the beach: sea shell, rock, tree bark. A favorite article of clothing, a shirt, hat. A favorite cup that they always drank out of. A family photo. A stuffed animal. A baseball glove, skis, lacrosse stick, tennis racket, golf club, running shoes. Did your child play Legos? Build models?"

There are many members of Fathers Forever who never replied to any of my emails about the exhibition. No arms were twisted.

I've been asked "What is your hope for this exhibition? What is it that you'd like to achieve?" To come full circle, I hope that the Fathers who have participated experience peace, reward, happiness and joy. That any catharsis realized is refreshing and gratifying. I hope that you, the viewer, will open your hearts and feel that you know the twenty-one children who are represented in this space. Please observe, not only with your eyes, but touch the objects and make a physical connection to our children. Feel the warmth. Share the love.

Steven Branfman

January, 2024

About Fathers Forever

Father's Forever is a grass roots group of men who share the common bond of having had children pass away. It is not a grief or bereavement group. There is no therapist, psychologist, clinician, grief counselor, clergy, professional, or advisor. We come from all walks of life: doctors, lawyers, finance, scientists, artists, teachers, military, athletic coaches, contractors. There are police officers, firefighters, politicians. We range in age from our 20s to 80s. Men have come to the group weeks after their child passed, and we have men who are over 30 years out. The passing of our children ranges from infancy to adulthood. We've had men who have lost more than one child. The circumstances include athletic endeavors, motor vehicle accidents, cancer, cystic fibrosis, congenital heart disease, sids, cardiac arrest, addiction, depression, suicide.

One of the ways I describe Fathers Forever to people is that if you were a fly on the wall for a given five or ten minutes of our conversation, you might not even know what brings us together.

Father's Forever is not for everyone. We've had men join us for a breakfast never to be seen or heard from again. In the nineteen years since connecting with the group, I've missed five meetings and events, and only because either I was sick, or I had to uncontrollably be out of town.

Father's Forever was founded by four men. They were seeing a couples grief therapist independently of each other. After some time she put the four couples together intentionally, thinking they'd be a good fit with each other -- she was correct. They met in her office periodically for about a year. It was helpful, but they eventually decided they could accomplish much the same on their own without a mental health professional "moderating" the conversation, so off they went. The result was Fathers Forever.

If you would like more information about Fathers Forever, please contact George Gorman; georgegorman14@gmail.com, (617) 784-7247, or Steven Branfman; sbranfpots@aol.com, (617) 447-3500



Jordon Bearak



Jordon Bearak (aka Jordan Brooks) was a very talented singer, songwriter, guitarist, and producer. He acquired his first guitar at age 15 in the spring of 2014. He was a natural at guitar, and very soon after he taught himself James Taylor's "Fire and Rain" and David Wilcox's "Rusty Old American Dream". By August of that year, he upgraded to a Martin guitar, and shortly after mastered the loop pedal. He also started voice lessons, and he was often compared to Ed Sheeran in the way he sounded vocally, as well as how he played the guitar and loop pedal.

After COVID, Jordan started creating his own music, and eventually started producing his music. He performed gigs at restaurants and bars. Jordan released 5 songs, and had written many more, some of which are being completed by friends.

When he was younger, Jordan was a "sports guy", and loved playing baseball, soccer, and especially basketball. We spent many hours as a family in gyms across eastern Massachusetts watching him play basketball on various teams.

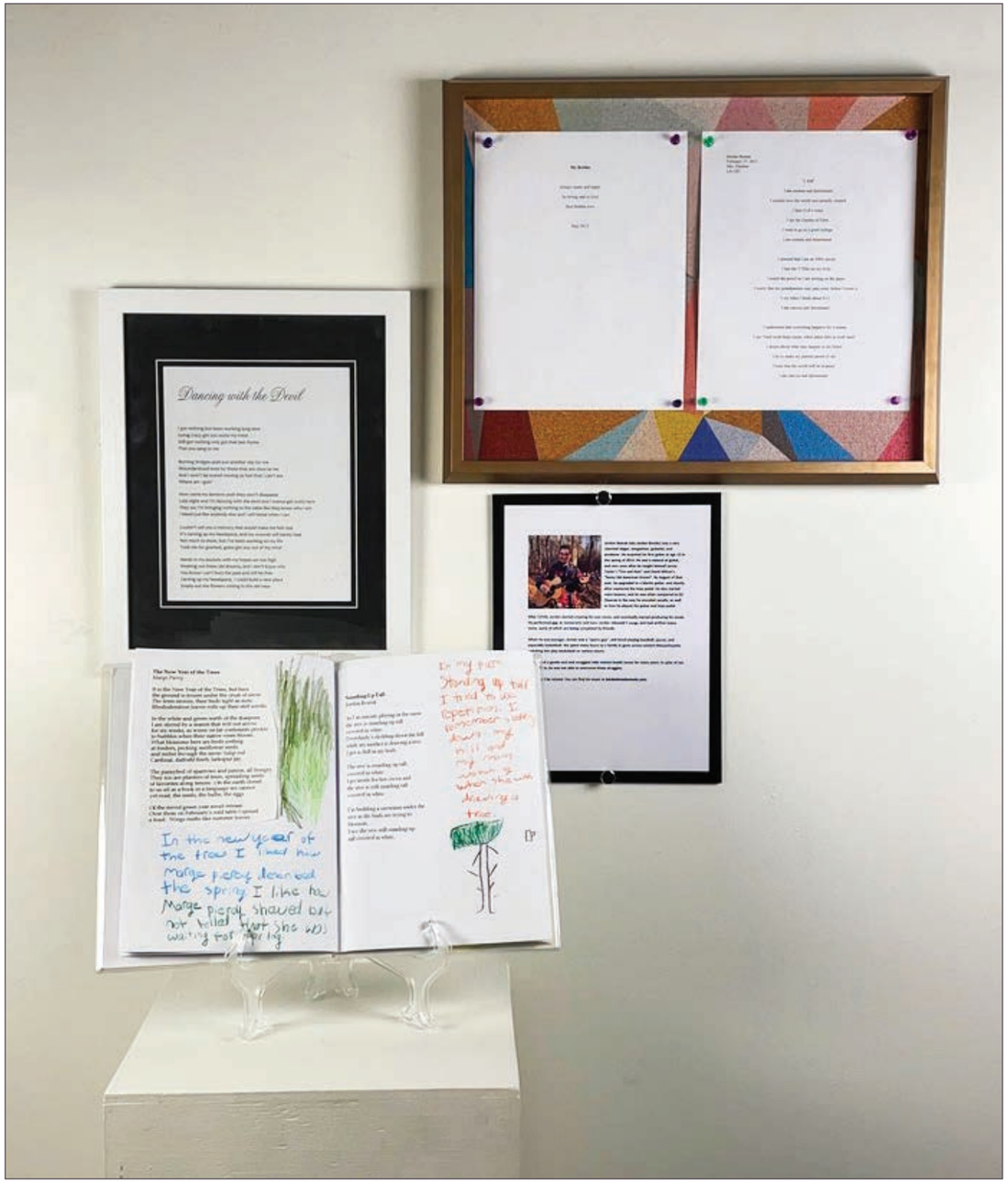
Jordan had a gentle soul and struggled with mental health issues for many years. In spite of our best efforts, he was not able to overcome these struggles.

Jordan will be missed. You can find his music at Jordanbrooksmusic.com.

Dancing with the Devil are the lyrics to the first song that Jordan wrote and published.

The poetry book is one that Jordan wrote in the 5th grade at Schechter Day School.

The two poems are ones he wrote on his own. One of them to his grandmother. I think he was 10, but I think they say how old he was.



Jared Branfman



Jared passed away on September 27, 2005, from brain cancer after 2 ½ years of treatment for spinal tumors. He was 23 years old.

Jared exuded kindness, compassion, and a spirit of helping others. He was a devoted son and always there for his brother before himself. He woke every morning wanting to make the world a better place.

Jared was an artist of extraordinary ability and passion. In his three years at the New York State College Of Ceramics at Alfred University, he left a legacy of creativity, intellectualism, curiosity, respect for his peers and teachers, and a body of work second to none.

He was an athlete and league champion in wrestling, track, and soccer. He was a scholar of art history, Hispanic culture and was fluent in Spanish. Jared endured the most rigorous treatments at the Jimmy Fund Clinic and Children's Hospital Boston, all the while maintaining his kindness, his positive outlook, and living his life to the fullest.

Covered Jar, 2002

Wheel thrown, stoneware fired.

This large, covered jar is among a body of work Jared did while at Alfred University. Jared was developing his already advance skills and experimenting with a variety of forms new to his repertoire.

Three Chawans, 2005

Handbuilt stoneware, wood fired.

These three Chawans (Japanese style tea bowls) are among the final pots that Jared made at home before he passed away. He wanted them fired in a wood fired kiln, so I sent them to a few potters whom we both knew, and who had wood fired kilns. They fired them and sent them back. Jared never got to see the finished Chawans.

Oil Cans, 2001-2003

Wheel thrown, handbuilt, stoneware fired.

Sewer Pipe, 2001-2003

Handbuilt, stoneware fired.

Jared was a keen observer. His influences came from the things around him. He saw beauty in the everyday objects that we take for granted. He took those objects and elevated them into objects of art to be seen and appreciated for their simplicity, craftsmanship and value.



Eric Fedele Chase



Erik was a vibrant colorful young man. He expressed the whimsy and unexpected opportunities of Life in his mantra; I don't make plans; plans make me. Eric's self-portrait, at age 5, reflects his vibrancy, as well as his fascination with the letter R! Childhood is such a time of magic, drama, and imagination. Eric loved to share these adventures with his older brother Matt. After his Junior year at the University of Vermont, Eric and Matt took a 2-month unscripted trip to Europe. On this trip Eric did not make plans, plans made him; including running with the bulls in Pamplona, Spain (and getting trampled by the bulls, so much for planning!)



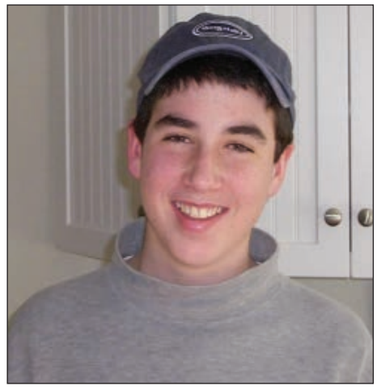
We all plan in life, but there is also the roll of the dice, the unexpected. Sometimes this randomness brings us great joy and sometimes great tragedy. Eric got back from Europe speaking more fluent French and returned to the University of Vermont to complete his Senior year as a Chemistry and Math major. He completed the proposal for his Honors Thesis titled: "Chemotherapeutic Drug Delivery to Cancerous Cells Using Silica Microsphere". What irony, in December 2011, at age 21 and 6 foot 4 inches, Eric was diagnosed with Leukemia (AML). Eric was treated at Dana Farber with great expertise and compassion. After intensive chemotherapy led to remission of the cancer, it was recommended he have a stem cell transplant. Eric died of severe complications (i.e. GVHD) in June 2012, after two months in the ICU. Eric's spirit shown through, even in the ICU when he lost all his skin and he was wrapped in bandages, he said to his parents: "I want you to love each other, as much as you love me!"



Eric's nickname evolved over time from "Lil Chase" in high school to "Big Sexy!" at college. His friends have been incredible. Two women from University of Vermont made the crane mobile hanging above and gave it to us at his funeral. Many of his high school friends have devoted themselves to raising money for Dana Farber riding with Team Eric Chase in the Pan Mass Challenge for over a decade. The Eric Chase Fund for Leukemia and Transplant Research has raised over $1 Million for research at Dana Farber, so other patients and families have more options in the fight against Cancer.



Max Clayman



Max was 18 years old when he died in April, 2010. His short life was full of love, fun and laughter and he was both a beloved son and youngest buddy to his three older brothers. He had a certain bright light, quirky sense of humor and ability to make people laugh that was unique. Maybe more importantly, he was the person that his friends would go to when they needed to talk and to be heard. He was a superb, unjudging, compassionate listener and in his presence, people naturally grew more relaxed and felt better. Max was a committed student and excellent athlete, particularly in racquet sports.

Max made so many friends because he genuinely cared for them, wanted them to feel comfortable in his presence and always had a silly quip that made people laugh and feel good.

And so we share for this exhibition three photos that begin to shed light on who Max was and why he was so special.

The first is a note he wrote to his mother when he was only 12 years old. It speaks to his sensitivity, warmth and caring.

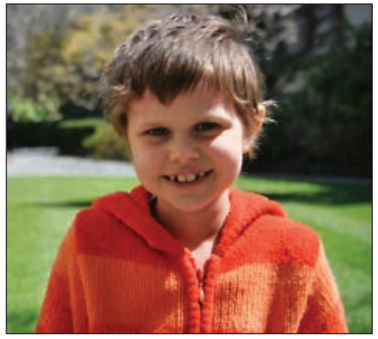
The second is a framed tennis T-shirt that was his favorite and in which he played almost always. At the top of the photo is a wristband his family and friends still wear. It says: “Max Clayman – In Our Hearts Forever”

The third is a poem written by a classmate right after Max’s death. It beautifully describes what Max meant to his friends.

In remembering Max, we celebrate a life that, though brief, was overflowing with kindness, laughter, and genuine connections. His memory lives on in the hearts of those who were touched by his warmth, leaving an enduring legacy of love and compassion.



Jessica Rose Doktor



Jessica Rose Doktor (1998-2007) was raised in Ipswich, MA. During her nine years of life, Jessie accomplished many of her personal goals. She rode a two-wheeled bike (with training wheels). She learned to read just weeks before she died. Jessica earned several belts in karate, the final one prior to entering the hospital for a stem cell transplant. She loved to dance, and took classes with her teacher Jenny Carlson as often as possible. She played on a soccer team.

Jessie believed in making a difference. During one lunch period at Winthrop Elementary, she was observed to pick up her lunch tray, stand up, and leave the crowded cafeteria table where her friends had gathered around her. She marched over to an almost-empty table where one classmate was eating isolated and alone. Jessie sat down at the nearly-deserted table and kept the other child company. Startled, the other students quickly followed her example, and brought their lunches to the same table where Jessie and their classmate were eating.

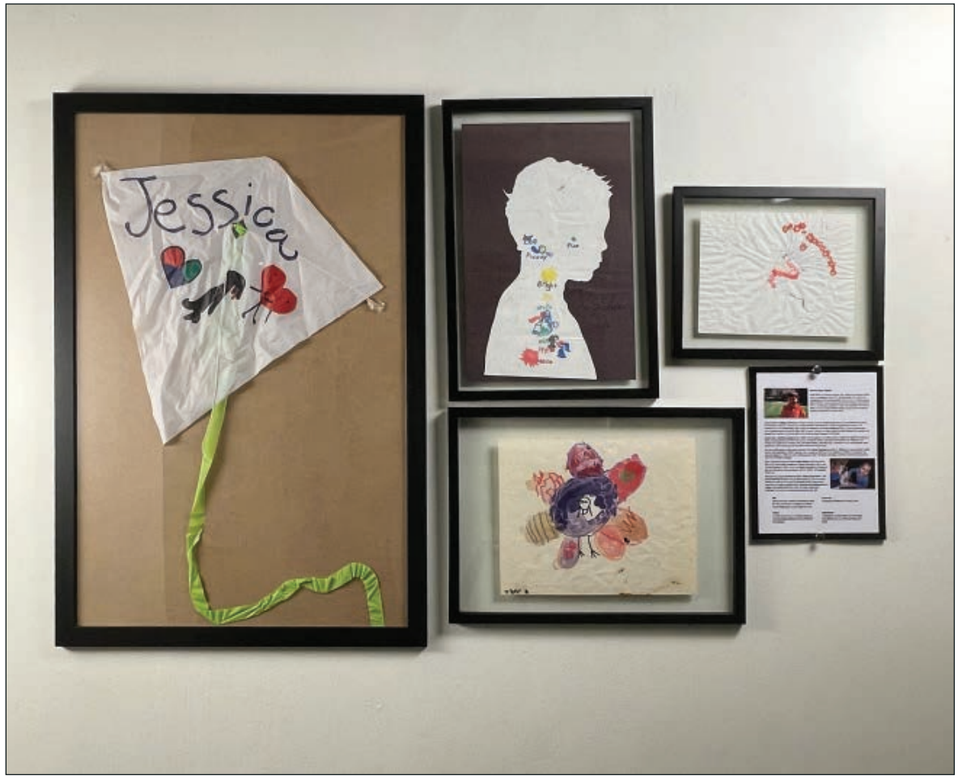
Jessica made a significant impact on the world, both through her own efforts and as a child who inspired the striving of others. She donated the proceeds from summer lemonade stands to the local animal shelter. She collected much-needed pet supplies at her birthday party. She loved animals, especially dogs, and hoped to be an animal healer when she grew up. Her favorite dog was the family's beloved black lab Lacey.



One memorable spring, Jessica rode on the lap of her Boston Marathon partner, Dr. William Tan, who is himself a polio survivor and a wheelchair athlete; together they crossed the finish line of the Marathon in William's wheelchair! She also participated in a PMC (Pan Mass Challenge) Kids event. Her father Christopher and sister Sarah have continued to ride in the Pan Mass Challenge!

Jessie enjoyed fast rides and adored roller coasters. She savored her time at the Yahoo Family Weekend at Wildcat Mountain in NH as well as Camp Sunshine in Maine. Jessie was highly competitive; she loved to play Uno, Monopoly, and other games with her family! She especially liked to win.

Along the way, Jessica invented the motto 'Bright Happy Power'. That phrase described the spirit with she approached life. Later this motto became the name of the nonprofit foundation Bright Happy Power, started by her family to support hope, happiness and empowerment for children and families living with cancer and other catastrophic challenges. Learn more at www.brighthappypower.org.



Kite *-Jessie loved the outdoors and being in fresh air. One way for her to connect to nature was by flying kites…so she made her own.*

Turkey *-It's that time of year. A favorite activity at school included creating art that reflected the holidays.*

I Love You *-A bouquet of flowers for Jessie's mom.*

Self Portrait *-A silhouette of Jessie filled with the things that defined her as a child and things she loved.*

Natasha Rose Domeshek



Natasha was a creative child -- she loved to draw, to write and perform skits with her friends and brother, and to help her mother bake. But more importantly, she was a sensitive and loving child -- a beautiful girl with a big heart for her family and friends.

A silly poem Natasha once wrote contains the line, “Girls dance and sing without their wings until it’s time to leave.” Like Clarence the angel in the classic film “It’s a Wonderful Life,” Natasha surely earned her wings.

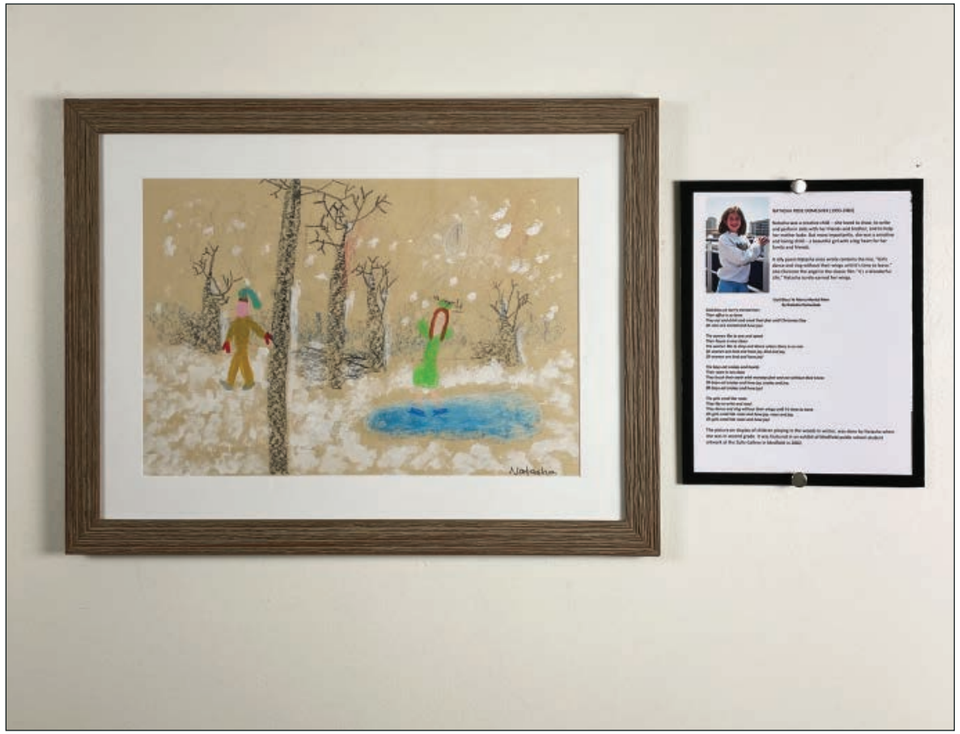
God Bless Ye Merry Mental Men
By Natasha Domeshek

God bless ye merry mental men
Their office is so lame
They eat and drink and smell their feet until Christmas Day
Oh men are mental and have joy!

The women like to sew and speak
Their house is very clean
The women like to shop and dance unless there is no rain
Oh women are kind and have joy, kind and joy,
Oh women are kind and have joy!

The boys eat snakes and lizards
Their room is not clean
They brush their teeth with monkeys feet and eat without their knees
Oh boys eat snakes and have joy, snakes and joy,
Oh boys eat snakes and have joy!

The girls smell like roses
They like to write and read
They dance and sing without their wings until it’s time to leave
Oh girls smell like roses and have joy, roses and joy,
Oh girls smell like roses and have joy!



The picture on display of children playing in the woods in winter, was done by Natasha when she was in second grade. It was featured in an exhibit of Medfield public school student artwork at the Zullo Gallery in Medfield in 2002.

Tabitha Feldberg



Tabitha (Tabi for short) was filled with love for life, her friends and family, and for having fun. With tons of energy and a huge smile, Tabi enjoyed dancing, shopping, making things, learning, and being silly. She was gorgeous inside and out: kind, funny, and not afraid to stand up for what she cared about. Tabi passed away suddenly from a heart condition after persevering through two open heart surgeries as a young teenager. She was thirteen years old.

Loved by all who knew her, Tabitha lived like sunshine: brightening each room she entered, warming hearts where she went. She could see the color in everything and believed in life as something beautiful; in her gentle, generous way, Tabi tended to loved ones like flowers, showering us in light and nourishing us with joy. She leaves behind a garden, where nature thrives as seasons change; her legacy is life everlasting.



I Am Myself written in 2012, framed by her teachers, signed by her classmates, and given to our family.

In her poem, Tabi writes about how she moves through the world. She tells us about her joy and delights in how she can lift others up with her radiant, happy energy. She tells us about how she doesn't feel like everyone else but knows what makes her unique also makes her special. She tells us how she tries, so hard, at everything and maybe she doesn't always get it right the first time, but she is curious and strong and determined, and that will get her where she needs to go. And finally, she tells us there is no one quite like her. And she is absolutely right.



Adam Nathan Frankel



Adam passed away shortly after his 21st birthday of fentanyl poisoning. Adam loved sports, his dog MJ, his family, and his friends. He was the kid who would be at the center of the fun times (and the mischief) that usually followed him around.

His love for the Boston sports teams was legendary (except for the Bruins as he was a Canadiens fan) – an avid baseball and hockey player, he knew all the players and their numbers and statistics from an early age. He would cheer when they won and cry when they lost. He would spend hours practicing his baseball pitches and swings, and even more time on the home rink at his home in Newton and then Brookline.

Adam started smoking pot in high school and struggled with substance use for four and a half years before taking a pill that had a lethal dose of fentanyl.

We liked this self portrait from elementary school as it captures Adam's fun side – big eyes, wide open mouth, taking in the whole world. We miss you Adam, and we know you miss us too.



Kate Wilner Fieldsteel



Kate Wilner Fieldsteel was an exuberant lover of all and the best hugger. The plaque on the Local History and Genealogy Room honoring her memory in the Needham Free Public Library accurately describes Kate as an avid reader, a skilled hugger, and a spirit lifter.

Kate was born on April 11, 1986, and died in her sleep of an apparent heart attack on February 28, 2022.



Kate lived to celebrate life with her family. She was always available to babysit her beloved niece and numerous family dogs. She could be counted on to take care of sick family members and to be a loyal companion in difficult times. Kate lived life with unrestrained joy. She had no enemies and only friends and admirers, who always felt so comfortable and accepted in her presence.

She had the ability to love without judgment and without limits. She was the one person in her large, blended family who got along with everyone and cared for everyone. Her greatest art was in her infectious and unrestrained laughter and her warm and comforting hugs for all.



While not a skilled artist, Kate was always proud to display her work in any setting. This piece is from her third-grade art project.





Adrienne Blair Garrido



Adrienne Blair Garrido, age 17 and 1 month, of Needham, MA, passed away on Sun Feb 11, 2018, following fatal injuries in a traffic accident.

In response to "Who am I?" posed in a class, she replied: "I am a hardworking student with an optimistic view on life who is half white, half Latina, a cross country and track runner, a friend, a daughter, and a sister."

Adrienne was a sweet, thoughtful young woman, full of life and light; she touched the lives of everyone she met. Compassionate friend, National Honor Society student, and elected cross-country co-captain for the coming academic year, Adrienne received an award for being the most improved cross-country runner in her sophomore year after improving her performance by 7 minutes over the previous year. Adrienne was the adored daughter of Blair Manning-Garrido and Pedro Garrido and a loving sister to Gabe.



Jonathan Greenleaf



Jonathan Greenleaf was a natural born builder. Somehow building, and working with wood, got into his DNA. He seemed to come into the world with these skills already in place and the drive and passion to exploit them to the fullest. As a child he was curious about his fathers work bench and tools, and it didn't take long for his woodworking skills to surpass his fathers.

The example here is from age 6; a multipurpose bin for screws, nails and whatever else. Fast forward to college when he became the enterprising Handyman on the Hill at the University of Colorado. Boulder became home and where he took his skills to new levels as Greenleaf Construction, L.L.C. winning the respect and admiration of fellow contractors. In 2015, at the age of 30, Jonathan tragically lost his battle with a rare disease, hemophagocytic lymphohistiocytosis (HLH). He lives on through the work he left behind and in the memories that his friends and family will cherish forever.



Twins Sarah and Jonathan Greenleaf. (Courtesy Sarah Greenleaf)



Annie Gorman

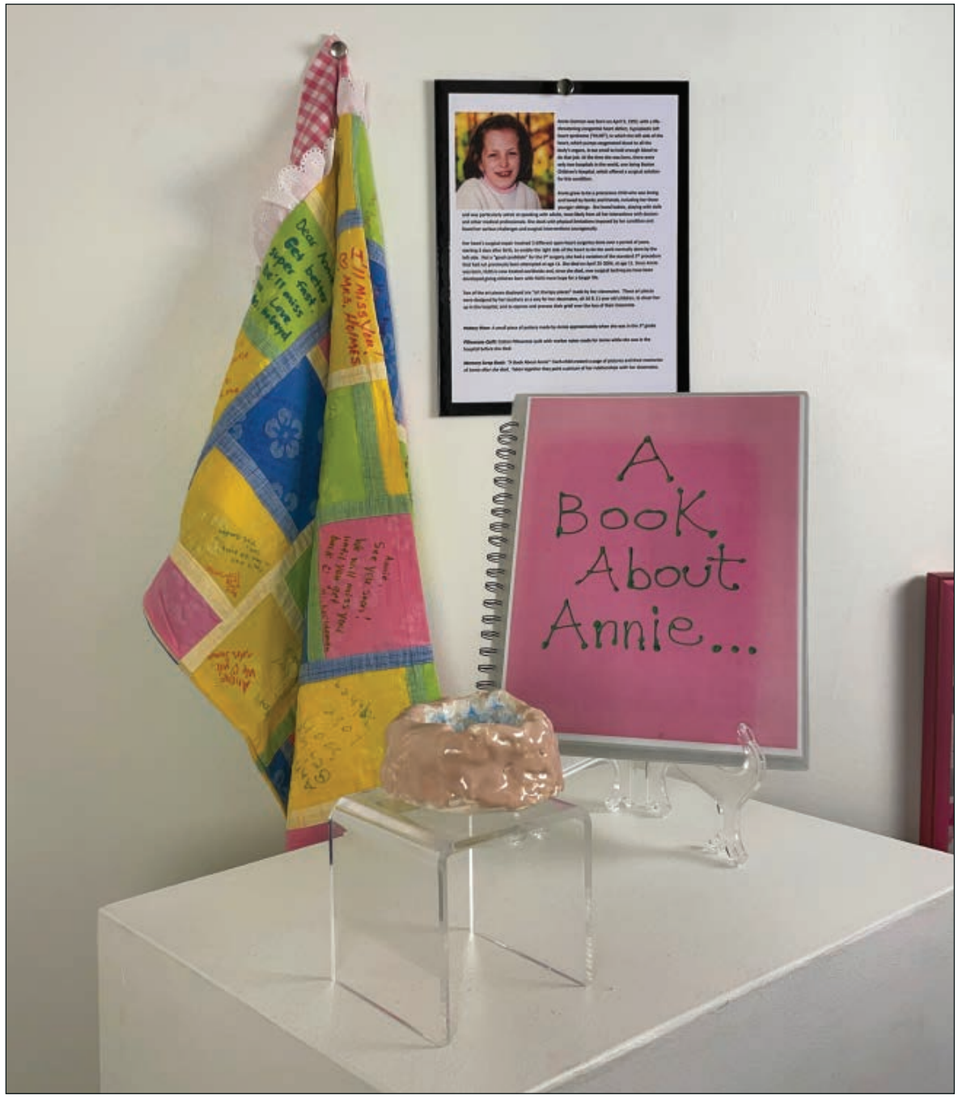


Annie Gorman was born on April 9, 1993, with a life-threatening congenital heart defect, hypoplastic left heart syndrome ("HLHS"), in which the left side of the heart, which pumps oxygenated blood to all the body's organs, is too small to hold enough blood to do that job. At the time she was born, there were only two hospitals in the world, one being Boston Children's Hospital, which offered a surgical solution for this condition.

Annie grew to be a precocious child who was loving and loved by family and friends, including her three younger siblings. She loved babies, playing with dolls and was particularly adroit at speaking with adults, most likely from all her interactions with doctors and other medical professionals. She dealt with physical limitations imposed by her condition and faced her various challenges and surgical interventions courageously.

Her heart's surgical repair involved 3 different open-heart surgeries done over a period of years, starting 3 days after birth, to enable the right side of the heart to do the work normally done by the left side. Not a "good candidate" for the 3rd surgery, she had a variation of the standard 3rd procedure that had not previously been attempted at age 11. She died on April 25, 2004, at age 11. Since Annie was born, HLHS is now treated worldwide and, since she died, new surgical techniques have been developed giving children born with HLHS more hope for a longer life.

Two of the art pieces displayed are "art therapy pieces" made by her classmates. These art pieces were designed by her teachers as a way for her classmates, all 10 & 11 year old children, to cheer her up in the hospital, and to express and process their grief over the loss of their classmate.



Pottery Piece: *A small piece of pottery made by Annie approximately when she was in the 1st grade.*

Pillowcase Quilt: *Cotton Pillowcase quilt with marker notes made for Annie while she was in the hospital before she died.*

Memory Scrap Book: *"A Book About Annie": Each child created a page of pictures and their memories of Annie after she died. Taken together they paint a picture of her relationships with her classmates.*

Scarlett Hubbard



Scarlett,

Your life was a blessing.
Your memory a treasure
You are loved beyond words.
And missed beyond measure
-anonymous

As a lifer born with Cystic Fibrosis, Scarlett calculated her life span to her mid-forties, what with breakthrough genetic research, followed by new medications from Vertex Pharmaceutical and others. Unfortunately, a new antibiotic had not been developed to ward against a particular bacteria that could become lethal infecting one with Cystic Fibrosis.

Scarlett passed away on January 17, 2011, at the age of 22 during her senior year at Hofstra University, New York.

Scarlett was a beauty with blond ringlets, a sweet smile, and tempestuous laughter. She was an animal lover and owner... From goldfish- horses especially her King Charles Spaniels and chihuahua. She loved nature, travel, theatre, and photography. As a child, Scarlett was a fearless Big Wheel fanatic and soon excelled at swimming, diving, and snow skiing. She was devoted to friends and family. She also loved working with younger children at a local summer camp. Scarlett along the way, developed an amazing divine spirituality above and beyond her Catholicism. I like to think it helped her near the end of her life. Scarlett was inspired artistically by her great aunt Celia who was a bonafide artist (oil, watercolor, acrylic, and photography) with a gallery on Newbury Street, Boston.



Jessica Miriam Kaplan

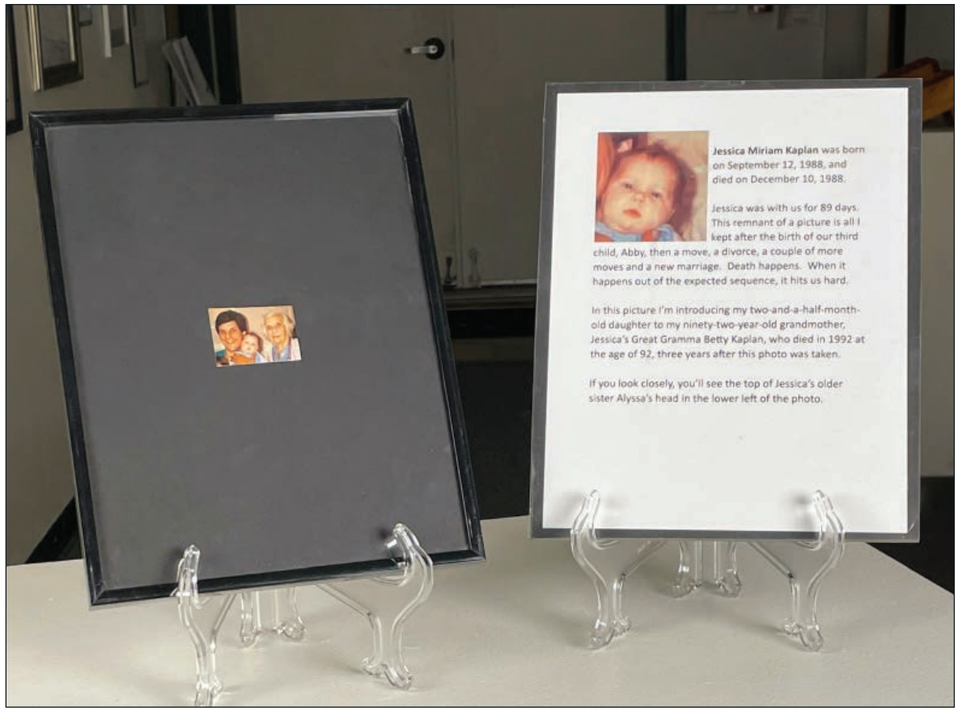


Jessica Miriam Kaplan was born on September 12, 1988, and died on December 10, 1988.

Jessica was with us for 89 days. This remnant of a picture is all I kept after the birth of our third child, Abby, then a move, a divorce, a couple of more moves and a new marriage. Death happens. When it happens out of the expected sequence, it hits us hard.

In this picture I'm introducing my two-and-a-half-month-old daughter to my ninety-two-year-old grandmother, Jessica's Great Gramma, Betty Kaplan, who died in 1992 at the age of 92, three years after this photo was taken.

If you look closely, you'll see the top of Jessica's older sister Alyssa's head in the lower left of the photo.



Michael C. Kardok, Jr.



Michael C. Kardok, Jr.

July 25, 1991 - May 22, 2016

Michael was not junior by any measure, standing 6'4" tall with a handsome smile that reflected his kind and generous heart. Michael always wanted to please those around him and would go to great lengths to make others happy at his own sacrifice. Suffering most of his life from severe depression, he was not always happy with himself, despite his numerous accomplishments, loving family and circle of friends he established. Michael found great joy in the outdoors, becoming an outstanding snowboarder and angler. When Michael found a passion he went "all in" as the picture of his collection of fishing rods, which he kept next to his bed, exemplifies.

Michael loved Vermont. He attended UVM as an environmental engineering student. Unfortunately, he spent more time on Mt. Mansfield snowboarding and hiking than he did in the classroom and never finished his degree.



Michael had many artistic passions. He spent a lot of time at Michael's Art and Supply store in Dedham, walking the isles, bringing home materials to make necklaces, bracelets, belts and other handmade items he liked to create. One of Michael's unfinished projects was his Dream Catcher, which was going to be used to protect him from bad dreams and evil spirits. Unfortunately, there were many demons in Michael's life and he was always looking for an escape.

Michael's mental health challenges consumed his life. He was treated by numerous doctors, psychiatrists and counselors. Near the end, he very sadly said to me "dad - none of this stuff works for me, I have done everything they have asked me to do and taken all the medications they have prescribed - nothing is helping me".

On May 22, 2016, Michael called us at 10am asking when we would be home. When we arrived at 12:30pm he had taken his own life. Our lives have changed forever without him. We miss him every day and our love for him remains as strong today as it was the day he was born.



Christopher Manente



Christopher Manente lived a life full of laughter, positivity, and promise. He was a gifted scholar, musician, writer, and debater. He loved the outdoors, climbed mountains, accompanied small and large music groups with his bass guitar, told terrific jokes, and above all was a trusted friend.

In May 2019, at the age of 17 Chris passed away in his sleep from an undiagnosed heart condition, just two weeks before his graduation from Lincoln Sudbury Regional High School. In his short life Chris achieved the rank of Eagle Scout, was a National Merit Scholar, was awarded the Louis Armstrong Jazz Award at his high school and had been admitted to Carnegie Mellon where he planned to study biomedical engineering. Most importantly, Chris touched the lives of his wide circle of friends with his patience, encouragement, and unwavering positive attitude.

Foot for Nature

2007

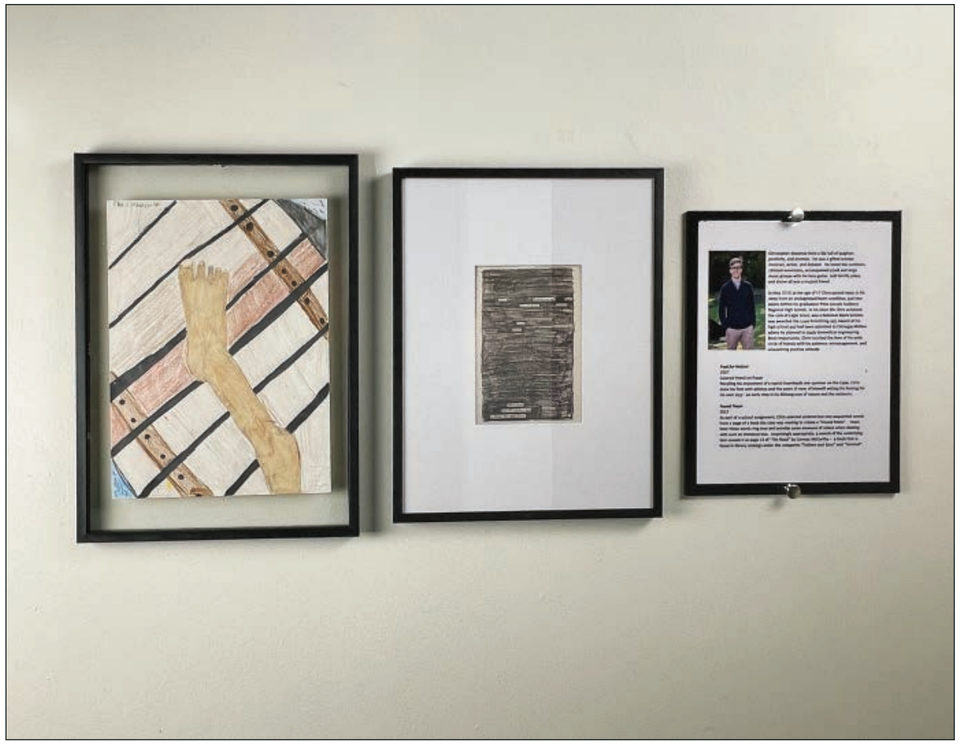
Colored Pencil on Paper

Recalling his enjoyment of a marsh boardwalk one summer on the Cape, Chris drew his foot with whimsy and the point of view of himself setting his footing for his next step - an early step in his lifelong love of nature and the outdoors.

Found Poem

2017

As part of a school assignment, Chris selected ordered, but non-sequential words from a page of a book the class was reading to create a "Found Poem". Years later these words ring true and provide some measure of solace when dealing with such an immense loss. Surprisingly appropriate, a search of the underlying text reveals it as page 13 of "The Road" by Cormac McCarthy – a book that is listed in library catalogs under the categories "Fathers and Sons" and "Survival".



Connor Neshe



On October 20, 2019, Connor suffered a fatal Sudden Cardiac Arrest in his sleep. He was 18 years old.

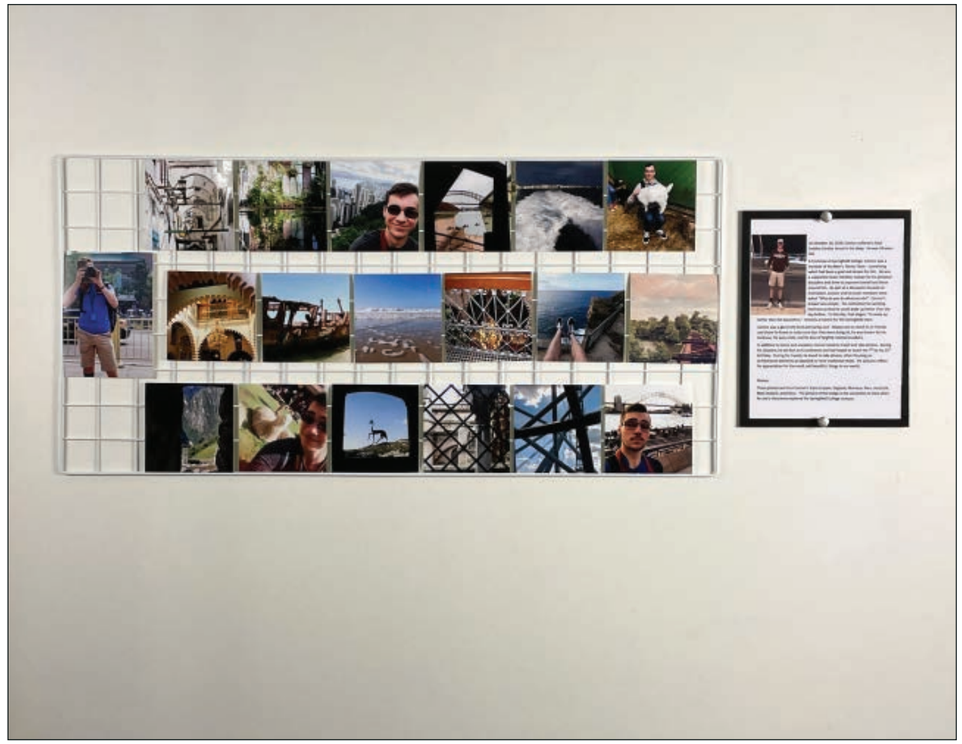
A freshman at Springfield College, Connor was a member of the Men's Tennis Team – something which had been a goal and dream for him. He was a supportive team member, known for his personal discipline and drive to improve himself and those around him. As part of a discussion focused on motivation, Connor and his team members were asked "Why do you do what you do?" Connor's answer was simple – his motivation for working hard was so that he could wake up better than the day before. To this day, that slogan, "to wake up better than the day before," remains a mantra for the Springfield team.

Connor was a genuinely kind and caring soul. Always one to check in on friends and those he knew to make sure that they were doing ok, he was known for his kindness, his easy smile, and his love of brightly colored sneakers.

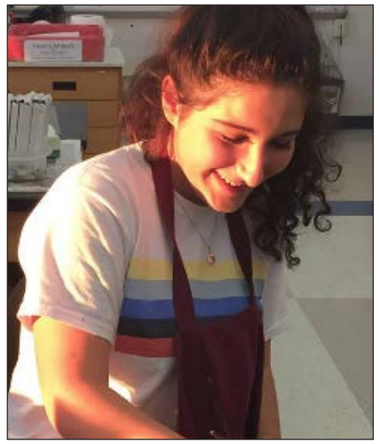
In addition to tennis and sneakers, Connor loved to travel and take photos. During his 18 years, he set foot on 6 continents and had hoped to touch the 7th by his 21st birthday. During his travels, he loved to take photos, often focusing on architectural elements as opposed to more traditional shots. His pictures reflect his appreciation for the small, yet beautiful, things in our world.

Photos:

These photos are from Connor's trips to Spain, England, Morocco, Peru, Australia, New Zealand, and China. The picture of the bridge is the last photo he took when he and a classmate explored the Springfield College campus.



Talia Newfield



Talia was independent, with a fierce sense of justice, right and wrong, she loved dogs and was kind to everyone.

She lifted people up who seemed be left out and made the world around her a little better.

Talia had no social media presence; she was grounded and wise beyond her years.

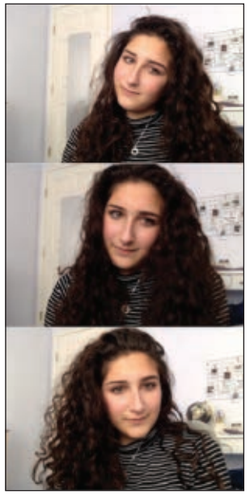


Talia was loved and she was happy. Talia had a terrific sense of style, she was modest, creative, unafraid, and beautiful.

Talia as an artist was developing her own vision and means of expression. Her work did not come easily, and she was an incredibly persistent and hard worker, and meticulous.

Her art teacher Mrs. Y said "Talia was testing the waters of telling the world that she was here and that she had something important to say... Talia was learning that she was good at art, and that her ideas and her way of seeing things had value and weight."

Needham High School's Advanced Placement (AP) Art required each student to complete 12 connected works that comprised a portfolio suitable for submission to art colleges and programs.



Green Plant – Painting and Photo

Talia completed this, her third piece, on the morning of the day that she was killed. Lisa, Talia and I had spent a wonderful day together, just hanging out. In this work, Talia interpreted a photo that she took of the underside of a plant in the window in her Art classroom, capturing the glow of sunlight from her perspective beneath the leaves.

Unfinished painting and paintbrush

During the week before she was killed, Talia spent hours on this her fourth piece, an adaptation of the third piece, and at one point she put the brush down and took this picture, which has evoked for us a quote from Viktor Frankel:

"We cannot, after all, judge a biography by its length, by the number of pages in it; we must judge by the richness of the contents...Sometimes the 'unfinished' are among the most beautiful symphonies."



Alex Paganelli



Born October 27, 1989, Alex was raised in Dover, attended Dover-Sherborn High School, and upon graduation attended Hamilton College. He died December 19, 2010, from injuries sustained in a car crash near his home. Beloved by family, friends, and teammates, he is survived by his parents Paul and Kerry, three sisters, three nieces and a nephew.

Two Ghosts Come Back For A Round Of Golf

This is a painting of two ghosts returning from the Afterlife to play a round of golf. The figures are modeled after Alex and his cousin, who both loved the game. The odd thing is that I did this painting a year before we unexpectedly lost Alex, in a car crash. Raising the eternal question, for me at least, is time what we think it is?

-Paul Paganelli / Alex Paganelli's father.

High School Physics Project

Alex loved music. He was a good pianist, even composing a few original pieces, and sang in an a cappella group. This fully functioning guitar was created for his high school senior year physics project. I am sure the energy of music, string vibration, sound amplification and so on were interesting to him- paired lightheartedly with a playful jaguar shape.



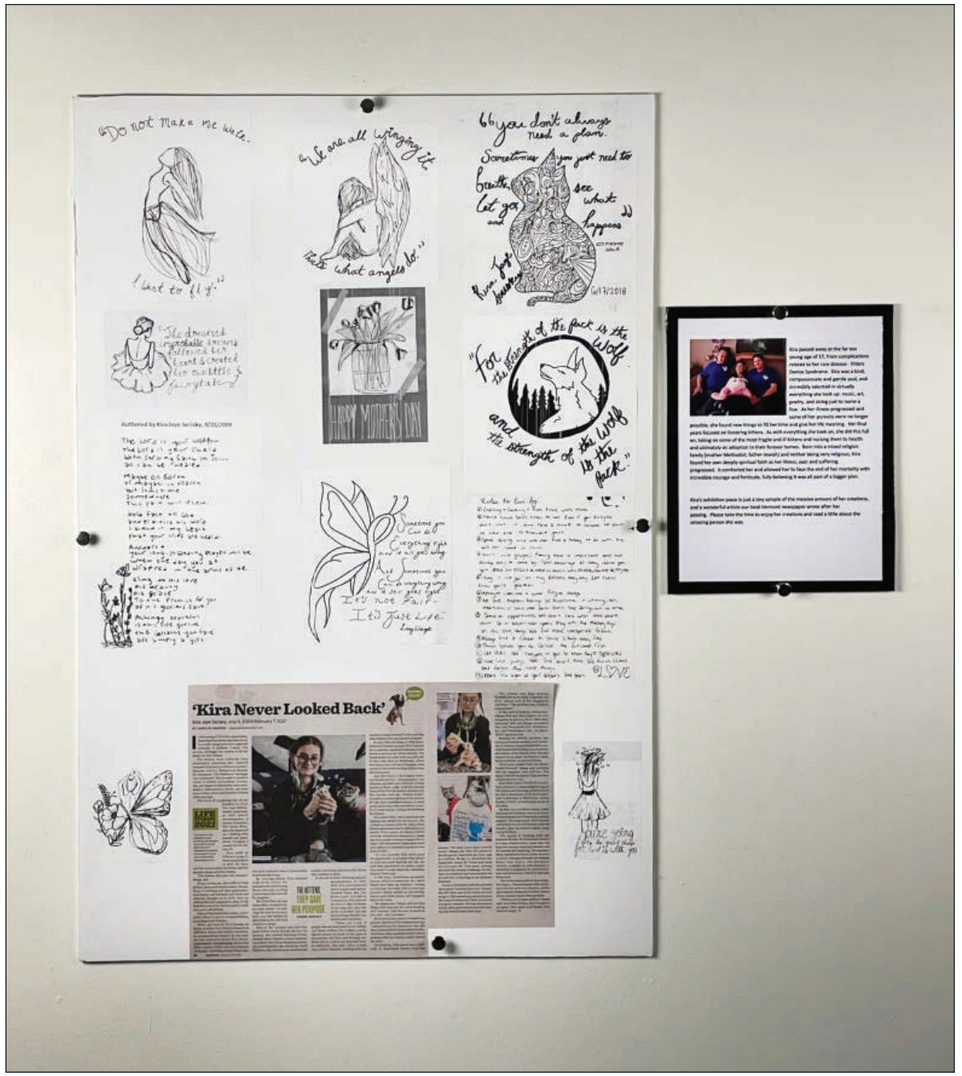
Kira Serisky



Kira passed away at the far too young age of 17, from complications related to her rare disease - Ehlers Danlos Syndrome. Kira was a kind, compassionate and gentle soul, and incredibly talented in virtually everything she took up: music, art, poetry, and skiing just to name a few.

As her illness progressed and some of her pursuits were no longer possible, she found new things to fill her time and give her life meaning. Her final years focused on fostering kittens. As with everything she took on, she did this full on, taking on some of the most fragile and ill kittens and nursing them to health and ultimately an adoption to their forever homes. Born into a mixed religion family (mother-Methodist, father-Jewish) and neither being very religious, Kira found her own deeply spiritual faith as her illness, pain and suffering progressed. It comforted her and allowed her to face the end of her mortality with incredible courage and fortitude, fully believing it was all part of a bigger plan.

Kira's exhibition piece is just a tiny sample of the massive amount of her creations, and a wonderful article our local Vermont newspaper wrote after her passing. Please take the time to enjoy her creations and read a little about the amazing person she was.



Andrew William Teibel



Andrew or Drew as we called him was our third child. From the moment of his birth, he brought so much joy to our family and to those who surrounded us. We have many memories of his short but blessed life.

His beautiful smile that would light up a room!

How people gravitated to his energy and how much he gave to others in his presence.

How he taught us to be grateful for his life, no matter how short.

He came and left in a flash and now 20 years later, he is still present with us every day. This picture is how we remember Drew at his most vibrant and beautiful self.

Drew was born in March of 2003 and every summer, our family would return to our second home at the Chautauqua Institution in upstate NY.

At four months old, this was Drew's first and only summer in Chautauqua and a time when our two boys (Max in the middle and Philip on the left), eagerly shared his arrival with friends and family.

This photograph, taken 4 months after his birth, was taken on our porch at Chautauqua and is our favorite picture of the three boys together.





Janelle Tobin



Janelle was born, September 8, 1996, as a happy, smiling baby who continued to smile throughout her life, even during the most difficult times. She received her first award in preschool for caring for others. Janelle loved people and made friends wherever she went. We could put her in a sandbox, and she would play with whoever was in there with her. She enjoyed gymnastics and cheerleading as a child and cheered for Danvers football from fourth grade through senior year in high school. She had a naturally loud voice and enjoyed using it at all the games and competitions. She was a natural leader who made special bonds with her fellow cheerleaders and many others.

Janelle had many friends, but her best friend is her younger sister, Holly. She loved her from the moment she was born. The sisterly bond was so strong that they were always there for each other. Janelle gave Holly advice and Janelle's friends became Holly's friends too.

We are a close-knit family who enjoyed many fun times together. We were fortunate to have a family house at Lake Ossipee in New Hampshire where we spent time boating and swimming during the summer and skiing with friends in the winter. Skiing was a sport that we loved and enjoyed together. We have many sweet memories of our vacations.

Janelle attended UMass Amherst and studied Business & Marketing at the Isenberg School of Management. She loved UMass and said going there was one of the best decisions she ever made. She was very involved on campus and became a board member of the Protect Our Breasts organization and Co-President of the UMass Ski & Board Club. She studied abroad in Amsterdam during the fall semester of her junior year. She traveled to 9 countries and 13 cities. We were lucky to visit her and traveled to four counties while celebrating 25 years of marriage. Holly visited her as well and they celebrated Holly's birthday in Paris and Amsterdam before coming home for Christmas.

At the beginning of the next semester at UMass, Janelle fell on black ice while waiting for the bus and landed on her backpack. She was in pain from the fall, but it didn't become intolerable until a few weeks later. She started her doctor visits at the UMass Health Center. The pain increased. She continued to see doctors and had a few emergency room visits. X-Rays and CT scans weren't showing anything that would explain her pain.

After fighting to get an MRI, the orthopedic surgeon who viewed her MRI sent it to Massachusetts General Hospital to be reviewed. They requested that Janelle come in for further testing. After more tests and scans, Janelle was diagnosed with a rare bone cancer – Ewing's Sarcoma.

As soon as she was diagnosed, she started chemotherapy. Janelle initially responded well to the treatments. She skipped a treatment in August to have her stem cells extracted in preparation for a bone marrow transplant at a later time. Shortly after this, the cancer started attacking her body with a vengeance. She needed back surgery to remove tumors from her spinal cord. She rebounded from this after brutal rounds of radiation. Then once again needed another back surgery to remove more tumors. The cancer was resisting the treatment. Her chemotherapy drugs were switched but the Ewing's was too aggressive. Janelle came home with hospice the week before Thanksgiving. She passed two days after Thanksgiving 2018.

We were and still are devastated with this unimaginable loss. Janelle fought courageously with a smile on her face and with the utmost optimism. We had many opportunities during her illness to express our deep love and admiration for each other. Janelle was thoughtful and expressed her wishes, one of which was to offer scholarships to deserving high school seniors. We miss her immensely, but this charity in her name is one of the best ways for us to honor her while helping others. Janelle has inspired us to make a difference. Her legacy of optimism will live on through the Janelle Lavender Tobin Charity.



Benjamin “Max” Warburg



Benjamin “Max” Warburg lived from May 15, 1979, to March 5, 1991. His last 10 months of life were spent among treatments for Chronic Myelogenous Leukemia.

We learned so much from Max during his 11 years of life with us. The creations of his hand and mind are here to illuminate Max’s efforts relating his inner sensitivities to the interests of people of all ages he encountered. Each creation conveys a benefit for the intended. Even as the end of our son’s life became an increasing threat to him, Max’s courage grew well beyond that expected of an 11 year-old. He was an extraordinarily engaging and enthusiastic participant in his own life and network. He left those of us remaining with memories filled with inspiration.

CARVING OF SAILBOAT ON WATER “ To Dad, Halcyon”. A 1990 birthday gift recognizing my love of the boat, his love of sailing with past and perhaps future family sailing ventures. He was a gifted sailor in a junior program, cited there for his own promotion of enjoyment and achievement for kids less enthusiastic.

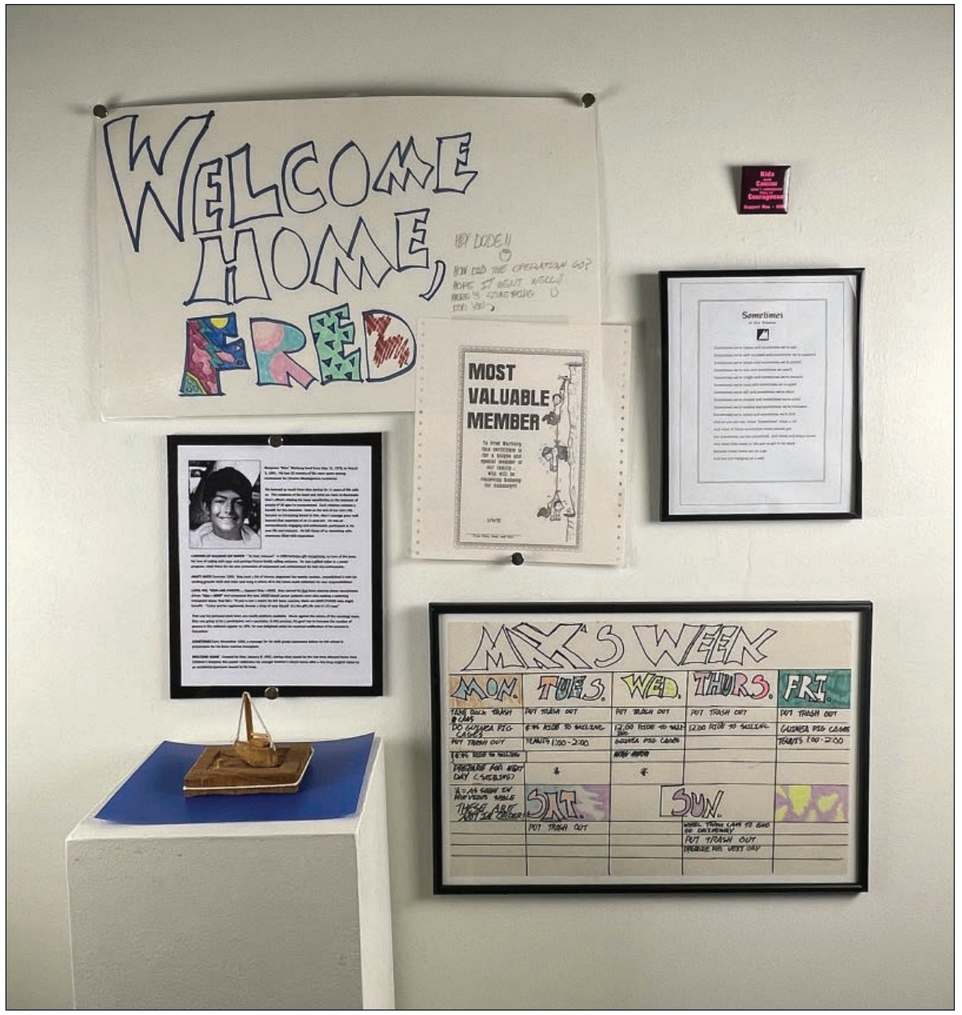
MAX’S WEEK Summer 1990. Max took a list of chores, organized the weekly routine , embellished it with his exciting graphic style and color and hung it where all in the home could celebrate his new responsibilities!

LAPEL PIN, “KIDS with CANCER……Support Max + 6000. Max named his five bone marrow donor recruitment drives “Max + 6000” and composed the text. (6000 blood cancer patients were also seeking a matching transplant donor that fall.) “If you’re not a match for MY bone marrow, there are 6000 OTHERS who might benefit. “Come and be registered, donate a drop of your blood! It’s the gift of Life and it’s SO easy”.

That was his personal pitch from any media platform available. Much against the advice of the oncology team, Max was going to be a participant, not a spectator, in this process; his goal was to increase the number of donors in the national register by 10%. He was delighted when he received notification of his success in December.

SOMETIMES Early November 1990, a message for his sixth grade classmates before he left school in preparation for his bone marrow transplant.

WELCOME HOME Created by Max, January 8, 1991, during what would be the last time allowed home from Children’s Hospital, this poster celebrates his younger brother’s return home after a day-long surgical repair to an accidental puncture wound to his knee.



"The exhibition is outstanding. It should be a documentary. That collaboration of families who have faced the same loss and who have helped each other heal by telling their stories and posting the beauty of the children they lost. A testament."

-Barbara

"Being in the gallery was profound. Thank you for sharing with us. So beautiful, so much love and joy in those lovely souls. I am truly inspired. So grateful to have experienced it."

-Betsy

"Seeing the beauty of the photos and the creativity and expression in the artwork that surrounded each of them shows the depth of love and caring that each experienced. What an amazing exhibit and one that you and your collective fathers should be so proud of. No matter the length of life, each individual is proven to be equally cherished. Sharing their gifts is healing for sure."

-Amanda

"Thank you for bringing these beautiful children into our hearts. May their memories be a blessing."

-Dina

"Thank you for sharing your amazing children with us. Their reach is far and wide."

- Kristen

"Writing with tears of sadness at the immense loss contained in this exhibit, AND the tears of joy and inspiration in now knowing these amazing souls."

-Tova

"Thank you for sharing yet another soul felt experience in remembrance of God's greatest gift to us."

-Brianna

"Thank you for putting together this very moving exhibit. For sharing the uniqueness, creativity, and strength of all of your beautiful children."

-Karen

"Absolutely incredible, moving, emotional, and truly a testament to each child's life cut too short. Thank you for showcasing these incredible children."

-Liza and Jeff

FATHERS FOREVER











THE GALLERY

Briana Hogan

Hope burns brightest in the dark
Emboldened by our bond of
Death and life and healing.
The weight and warmth of every soul
Embraces us all.
Unfathomable loss overshadowed by the unconditional love
And faith that remains
Unwavering, unyielding, that connects us eternally.
As a piece of kintsugi
I am beautifully broken–
And better for it,
Having met these beautiful souls.
For it has been an honor
To be so humbled by their presence,
Lives, stories, and expressions.
Which is art in and of itself, is it not?



GORSE MILL
GALLERY
IN MEMORY OF JARED MICHAEL BRANFMAN

The Gorse Mill Gallery features exhibits by local, national and international artists.

The Gallery is located in the Gorse Mill Studios building at 31 Thorpe Road, Needham, MA, and is open to the public Monday - Thursday 11-5 and Friday 10-4, or by appointment.

Exhibitions change each month with opening receptions often featuring gallery talks by the exhibiting artist.

The Gorse Mill Gallery is also available for meetings and events. For more information, please contact: info@gorsemillstudios.com


SPRINGFIELD
COLLEGE