

Viewpoint: James Grande III - Katie will be missed by all those whose lives she touched**BYLINE:****DATE:** 11-10-1999**PUBLICATION:** Providence Journal Company**EDITION:****SECTION:** Newspapers_ &_ Newswires**PAGE:** C-05

I was always told that nobody is perfect. I must say I believed that. Of course, that didn't last long, because then I met Katie. I was never really close to her, but I wish I had been. Her kindness was spread throughout the state, brightening the darkest corners of Rhode Island.

She was an "A" student, making high honors almost every year. She was known for her intelligence and her popularity. But more than that, she was known for her ability to boost everyone's self-esteem, shooting their spirit up like a rocket soaring through the skies.

Katie lived to make our society better than it was. Katie was without a doubt "perfect." I went through my life admiring her will to succeed, but not paying attention to the lives she touched. I would soon realize what magic that girl was bringing to our world.

A few days after Katie and one of her many friends, Becky, both celebrated their birthdays, and two days before Halloween, tragedy struck the quiet town of Narragansett.

I received the news that Katie, Becky and Becky's mother had been in a serious car accident, leaving Katie and Becky's mother both in eternal rest, while Becky had suffered physical and emotional injuries.

They were going on an innocent trip to the mall when they were rear-ended by an alleged drunk driver, sending them across the median to be hit by oncoming traffic.

Their mangled car split in half, and two innocent, well-lived lives were taken away. Not only was the driver allegedly drunk, he was described as a "walking pharmacy" because he had been carrying multiple drugs and alcohol. He was put in jail with bail of a half-million dollars, too much for him to afford.

We may get our justice, but that still isn't going to bring Katie back. The thing that really made me angry was that the man was a repeat offender and made it out virtually undamaged. This was, in fact, the turning point in our entire town's view towards life, and how precious it really is.

The following Sunday, the school was open for people to go in and talk about the tragedy with counselors. It was a great help for many of us, but of course nothing could ever fill the hole that was formed in each of our hearts.

Katie was a special person, and we were determined to have her memory live on. We soon had two banners on which hundreds of students signed their names and wrote brief messages to Katie and her family, each with its own special meaning.

We put on ribbons and armbands the next day in Katie's favorite color, blue.

It was hard getting through that school day, for each minute was more and more depressing. Finally, after what seemed like an eternity, the bell rang, and we were off to say good-bye one last time.

It took me and my family two hours to get into the funeral home where the wake was being held. The line stretched through the parking lot and into the street. For some, it was a 5 1/2-hour wait. Inside, there wasn't a single dry eye; everyone felt this loss.

The next day at the funeral, hundreds came and paid their respects, as well as showing their sadness.

Katie left this world without a single soul who was an enemy. She left this world with thousands of people who will never forget the life she lived.

As her dad said in his eulogy, "Katie always was a leader and role model, and she always liked to take charge. I wouldn't be surprised if she was the head angel by the end of this week."

Katie's parents were both courageous, and I'm sure Katie was looking down on them with pride and dignity for having the strength to speak in front of hundreds of people.

Katie was indeed "perfect," and her life was a life beyond words. That is why God chose her as his "perfect angel."

James Grande III, 13, is an eighth grader at the Narragansett Pier School. He was a classmate of Kaitlyn DeCubellis, who died in an automobile accident on Oct. 29.

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