

Remembering Will ~ by Will's Dad Brian Washburn

We lost a special young man. I want to thank everybody who have shown great care for our family and Will and have reached out: friends, neighbors, people we don't know, businesses, the entire community. A huge appreciation to the families who helped organized this event (the Saturday 5/16/2020 public memorial service) and the media channels and city officials who came to support this celebration. Everyone has been amazing, and we are grateful.

In the time of our loss and sorrow over these past weeks we've heard so much about Will- so many sides of our son we never saw. Will had many friends. He had his basketball friends, baseball friends, gaming/ x-box buddies, classroom friends, snap friends,and the list goes on and on. The school set out a box for his classmates to share thoughts and wishes for Will and our family. In those notes, there were a few constants:

1. Will had a way to uplift his environment. He put those he knew- and some he didn't know - at ease.
2. The boy always had a huge smile on his face.

Will loved life. He had fun. He always tried to create laughs.

His energy was contagious, so that's how I'd like us to continue to honor him. Keep that energy alive. If you're playing basketball, shoot a few extra free throws with a smile- or in Will's case, a few extra 3 pointers. If you're in the batting cage, swing a few extra times with a smile. Work hard with a new energy in honor of Will. Smile at someone you may not have even realized is in the room. Help someone you would have not otherwise recognized- because these are the qualities that he possessed. These are the characteristics he displayed in all the stories shared.

I'd like to recap a few school stories sent to us:

- 1) I was in Algebra, Web, National Junior Honor Society, and student council with Will. He and I never really talked...but every time he would walk into the room, he would have a smile on his face that lit up the room and made everyone happier. He is the person in the school who genuinely cared about everyone no matter what. He was the most energetic in our groups. He would have so much fun (and there may have been a mentioning about notes thrown across the room when a teacher wasn't looking).

- 2) I'm so sorry about Will. He was truly a great guy- so nice to everyone. He didn't care if you were popular or not. He was always willing to help everyone. I loved watching him play basketball and baseball. I would go to the basketball games to be w my friends and he always gave his best. He seemed focused and in the game. Will and I were not close but every time I'd talk to him, he was nice and caring. We truly need more people in the world like Will. God has a plan.
- 3) Finally = one more recap from a parent = You don't know me. I'm so incredibly sorry for your loss. I want you to know what an amazing, genuine soul Will was. My daughter had a hard year with some bullying and Will continuously showed love. He stayed a shining light for her. He listened and made her laugh. I am forever grateful God gave my daughter Will at that time in her life.

There were so many letters and they all meant a great deal to our family. I hope we will continue to honor him by living more like he did.

As parents, our goal is to raise our children to be honest, caring, and good people. A type of person who is the best of OUR best. From the time we wake to the time we sleep we focus our days on our kids. Will had achieved the best of our best and more.

Over these weeks nothing has been normal. I believe we all will learn a new normal now.

One of Will's teacher shared one of his virtual assignments with us: that was completed while out of school with this pandemic. He never shared this with us. It speaks volumes of the way Will viewed life. The assignment was this:

The teacher asked: *PERFECTION- your idea of perfection. Describe in detail what a perfect world would be like. What things would be eliminated? What things would be added? And how would you take care of the world's problems?*

Will's answer was: *I think the world is perfect. God made the world and he puts his creations there for a reason. People think they have to have money, looks, good spouse and/or a good house. Although I think that God chose those things for us, because he saw that in us, (we have what he wants us to have). So, I wouldn't take or add anything in this world, and I would do what I'd have to do to take care of the world's problems.... because God created those ALSO for a reason.*

Will had faith. Will had love. Will had the best of his mother and the best of me, so we will celebrate that. Will has an amazing sister who we are so blessed to still have here on this earth. We move forward. Let us all continue to celebrate his life. Being angry at times is allowed- Lord knows I've been there. Being happy and laughing about Will is what he would want—we've done that too. Being sad about our loss is indefinite, but we will be there to continue on and continue playing a part in this community. You have all shown us love and we will continue to show it back.

I'd like to close with a poem titled **Broken Chain**:

We little knew that morning that God was going to call your name,
In life we loved you dearly, in death we do the same.
It broke our hearts to lose you, you did not go alone,
For part of us went with you, the day God called you home.
You left us peaceful memories, your love is still our guide,
And though we cannot see you, you are always at our side.
Our family chain is broken, and nothing seems the same,
But as God calls us one by one- the chain will link again.

Thank you.