

Matt Update

February 16, 2020

After enduring the 15-year anniversary of the day Matt was killed I can't help but reflect on everything that has happened over these last fifteen years to get me where I am today. As I look back on that horrifying day when my life, all our lives who loved Matt, changed forever. I still do not know how I got through it. Every detail of that unbearable day, and days to follow are seared into my memory and can take me to my knees on any given day. Even now I am surprised at how debilitating that pain can be in an instant with no warning and sometimes no foreseen reason. Of course, this time of year it is an emotional roller coaster and I accept that, I do my best to keep it from disrupting my day-to-day routine. Grief and depression are very powerful emotions and should never be taken lightly. Like the ocean, never turn your back on it, it will knock you down and suck you under before you know it.

The most important thing I've learned through these many years of battling grief and depression is that you are never done, you cannot take joy for granted, and you cannot think that the deep sadness and incapacitating pain is not coming back, because it is. It is waiting in the wings for you to put down your armor so that it can seep in and do its best to wreak havoc on your life once again. When that happens, and believe me it will, you must remember the joy you had, you can have it again but you must work so incredibly hard to get it back and you can't give up until you do. No matter how hard it seems, no matter how loud the voice in your head gets that says maybe this time is the time you don't come back. You don't listen, you fight, and fight like you have never fought before and I promise you, you will get there. You just can't give up, you must believe you can do it and find strength in the fact that you did it before, believe and pray.

AHA! turned 5 this year, and as I look back, I marvel somewhat at what we have accomplished in a relatively short period of time, with very little money for the most part, but a lot of heart, blood, sweat, and tears, by many.

This past year was a busy one for AHA! lots of new things happened, lots of doors opened and lots of people hearing our message, and clarity as we move forward.

Last year AHA! ventured into the sports arena to shed some much-needed light on the horrible hazing's that go on there. We were able to get a Community Fund table at a weekday game and 30 seconds on the jumbo Tron at the SF Giants game with very little notice. This year we met with the Giants in November to set up an AHA! Day at the park on Saturday, August 15th. We have a block of 200 group tickets reserved for purchase through our website for this very special day. \$5 from each ticket purchased will go to AHA!

Last year we got our feet wet with a Home Run Derby Fundraiser, and everyone who came out had so much FUN we have scheduled our Second Annual Home Run Derby with Payless Batting Cages at Willow Pass Park in Concord on Saturday, July 18th. You will be able to sign up on our website soon.

As you may see a theme here, baseball has a very special meaning in our house which has transferred to AHA!. And so, AHA! Is sponsoring four PHBA baseball/softball teams this year. We are very excited to go out and cheer for our teams, get to know the players, and their parents.

Of course, our year is not complete without our annual Monte Carlo Night Gala, always set the second Friday in September. This year it falls on Friday, September 11th a very somber day for America, this fact will not be taken lightly as AHA! will pay tribute to those we've lost.

I recently returned from Chapman University where AHA! is partnering with a brilliant student at the University, Olivia Mello. We will be returning to participate in her HS and MS mentoring sessions which will be overseen by AHA! Board Member, Andrew McPhee, one of Matt's closest friends.

We are excited to announce our website is getting an overhaul we are looking forward to its unveiling in the near future. At the end of March, I will be going to Springfield, MO, joined by Jerry Lim and Michael Quintana where we will be speaking to the YPO, (Young President's Organization), A Global Leadership Community of Chief Executives, as well as possibly Missouri State University while we are there.

One would think after 15 years it would get easier. It does not, you just learn to live with the pain. You'd think you would have come to terms with it. You do not, you learn to accept it. Your life has become a constant battle within itself to keep your sanity and protect your joy. You know that you can never let your guard down for fear that the darkness will take over once again, and that is a road you do not want to go down because it might just be the one time you never return. That is your new reality.

Remember, life is short and memories are precious. Time goes by in the blink of an eye...don't miss out. **MAKE MEMORIES!!!** And when you are feeling down, remember the good things in your life and be thankful you have them, life is a blessing.

“Hug your children and tell them you love them EVERY DAY!”

God Bless....

Love and Smiles,

Debbie, MM

www.wemissyoumatt.com