

On behalf of the Becknell family I want to thank you all for being here. The outpouring of love and support has sustained them and has been overwhelming in the best sense of the word. It was evident yesterday by the line around this building just how much Madison was loved.

My name is Julie Stottmann and I have had the privilege of knowing Madison and her family for the past 6 years and my husband Andy and I were blessed to be with Madison just last week at Disney World, the happiest place on Earth. We could not have imagined that less than 3 days after our trip Madison would be going to the happiest place ever created,

Madison Pearl Becknell was born on June 20, 2002 with that head full of red hair. Debra described Madison as a very intuitive child, she was patient even as a little girl. Debra said that if Madison wanted something and Debra was in the middle of something else, she could explain to Madison that she would finish what she was doing and then take care of whatever it was that Madison needed and she would be fine with that and go do something else til Debra was ready but she would definitely remind her mom if she forgot!

Madison was described to me yesterday as having poise even as a little girl.

We actually talked about this last week, her parents said that she was a really clumsy kid and Madison agreed and said that she still was! Elizabeth said she was always tumbling! She was constantly banging into things and falling down but oddly enough never really felt any pain even when she should have. Debra said “we would hear her knock into something in another room or we’d hear her fall but she would always follow that up with “I’m OK!!”

Madison’s second grade teacher described her as always having a smile on her face and being the sweetest, most genuine person.

Madison was a 2020 graduate of Oldham County High School, she continued her education at the University of Kentucky College of Health Sciences majoring in clinical leadership and management with a minor in Communications. She was a social media influencer for the College of Health Sciences. Madison is quoted as saying “I hope to convey how fun college can

be if you make it fun. Yes, we are all here for the degree but it doesn't have to be all work – you should relax and take some time to enjoy it too". That sounds like Madison doesn't it? Always finding the fun. Madison was a proud member of Alpha Gamma Delta and her sorority sisters meant the world to her. Bill told me that when Madison joined AGD he didn't realize he would be getting so many daughters! Where are her AGD sisters? Raise your hands. Ladies, you are deeply loved by this family.

The day that Madison passed away was also the last day of her practicum at UK Integrative Medicine and Health. She loved her time there and was passionate about Integrative and Functional medicine. This past summer she was an intern at Nazareth Home working with the elderly. She absolutely loved this internship and the people that she served. Of Course, Madison was equally loved by them.

In a recommendation letter from her manager at UK Integrative she is described as having a "rare combination of outstanding communication skills, an insatiable thirst for knowledge and an unwavering commitment to growth and improvement." She was really proud of that letter.

Madison was scheduled to graduate UK in May and was going to continue her education by pursuing her MBA at the University of Cincinnati. UK has already reached out to the Becknell family to let them know that Madison will still be receiving her degree in May. I know she would be so proud and the Becknells are so grateful.

I have a little more to say but at this time I would like to ask Madison's dear friends Rachel, Gabby and Sam to come up and share a little bit about Madison.

Ladies thank you so much for doing this, I know it's hard but what a great way to honor you friend.

So I want to start out by asking each of you to tell us about when you first met Madison and what your first impression of her was.

Tell us a funny story about your time with Madison

Can you tell us a little about the impact that she has had on your life

If you could tell Madison one more thing what would it be?

Madison was the queen of the ".5's" Andy loved to tease her about her ".5" photos. He would say aren't those called wide angle? And she would smile and say ".5" Bill and Debra thought it would only be fitting that we take a picture because Madison certainly would have taken about 100 by now. I keep imagining her in Heaven doing her "Point of View" pictures. POV Me and Jesus! POV Madison Pearl at the Pearly Gates.

Take photo.

Thank you girls so much.

Andy and I have have shared incredible lake weekends and had the great opportunity to travel to Phoenix and the Grand Canyon twice with the Becknell family and have had some of our best times with this crew. Madison was always taking pictures and videos, documenting all of our adventures. One of which we weren't sure we would make it out of. We had hired a man with a tour company to take us from Phoenix to the Grand Canyon. The van he showed up in was on it's last leg and our 70 something tour operator, Jim, regaled us with stories and comments that weren't exactly politically correct. As those of us up front tried to nod and smile and pray that we would make it back to Phoenix in one piece, Madison and Elizabeth were in the back seat of the van laughing their heads off. I think old Jim really thought he was impressing us all. At the end of the trip Jim pulled off the highway onto a deserted exit road and I think at that point we all thought "well this is how we meet our end". To our massive relief and delight, Jim just wanted us to see the stars before we got too close to the city. The sight of those stars in the pitch black Arizona sky was one of the most awesome things any of us had ever seen. It was like all of the stars in the sky showed up in that one place just for us. We could have stayed there all night but the eeriness of that deserted road and the great likelihood of snakes in the area got us back into that van sooner than we would have liked. I can't even imagine the stars and galaxies that Madison has already seen.

As I said earlier, we got to spend last week with Bill, Debra, Parker and Madison at Disney World. Madison was so excited, she could not wait to go to Star Wars Land. As a little girl, she would come home every day from school and watch Star Wars. Meeting Chewbacca, she said, was on her bucket list and last Thursday she got to check that off. She and Parker built their own R2D2's and she was so happy, she kept saying "isn't he cute?!?" While at Disney she got to try a Dole Whip for the first time, which she loved, she was never far from a popcorn stand and she had what she described as the best gluten free chicken tenders she had ever eaten.

While we were at Disney we talked about personality tests that she and her family had taken. Each personality type had a list of celebrities or fictional characters that also had that personality type. Madison absolutely loved the fact that her personality was the same as Michael Scott from The Office and that Parker coincidentally, was Dwight Schrute! She just thought that was so funny and pretty accurate!

Madison adored Parker and Elizabeth. They shared such an incredible bond, one that can never be broken. They are fiercely protective of each other and I rarely saw them argue or fight. Except this once... We were in Phoenix about 3 years ago all sitting around the dining room table when Elizabeth made a comment about someone Madison knew, the rest of us didn't think it was anything terrible, but Madison, also being fiercely protective of her friends, called out Elizabeth for not being very "Christ like" in her comment. Elizabeth made some reply and before we could blink, in a fit of righteous anger Madison slapped Elizabeth right across the face! We were all stunned! I said what did you say about being "Christ like"??? She was a feisty red head for sure! By the end of the evening everyone was back to being friends and Madison was so embarrassed whenever we would re-tell that story. Sorry Madison! You didn't mess with Madison's friends or her family.

Madison adored her family's cats Sally, Lilly and Smokey and was so excited that they all slept in the bed with her the night before she left for Disney. She showed me all the pictures she took to document it. Bill told me that she seemed to have a deep intuition when it came to animals, like she could tell what they were thinking or feeling.

Madison loved music and was a devoted "Swiftie" and had the time of her life this past summer when she and her girlfriends went to Chicago to see Taylor in concert.

And I would be remiss if I didn't mention Madison's deep, deep love, bordering on obsession with essential oils!

This is how Madison has been described over the past few days:

having a radiant smile

like being around sunshine

a light

a contagious laugh

always happy – her family said that they honestly couldn't remember a time when she wasn't happy...maybe sad or upset every once in a while but it never lasted through a full day.

She was called the definition of a true friend.

“If Madison was in the room it was a happy place”

She had a beautiful spirit

she always made sure the people she loved were loved by her in the smallest most meaningful ways.

She was always the friendliest person in the room

one of the sweetest students I have ever taught

she truly did light up any room she entered

she was an angel on earth

genuine kindness

a comforter

she loved to snuggle

Her parents said “she was our sunshine”

Over and over Madison was described as a ray of Sunshine. And Madison truly did light up a room.

One thing that I haven't talked about yet, the most important thing, is that Madison was a committed Christian. Even Madison wasn't good enough to earn Heaven on her own, no one is, so at a young age she put her faith and trust in Jesus. Madison loved Jesus and everyone that knew her, knew that about her. She wasn't afraid to share or defend her faith. Madison was pure sunshine because she let the Son, Jesus, shine through her. Trust me when I tell you that light is not gone just because she isn't here with us. Madison is not here but make no mistake, Madison is not dead, in fact, she is more alive than she has ever been. None of us were created for Earth to be our final destination, we were made for eternity. When Madison closed her eyes last Wednesday for the final time on this earth, she immediately opened them to the wonders of Heaven and the face of the Savior that she loved. I imagine the first words that she heard were “well done, good and faithful servant”.

Madison is still doing things that she loved to do here on earth. She is dancing, she is singing, she is worshipping God and that smile that we have all been talking about is bigger and brighter than it has ever been. Madison is in a place, yes, a real physical place where there is no pain, no suffering, no crying, no allergies and no clumsiness. She is not sitting in a corner of Heaven sad because she misses us. She's at the biggest party imaginable and she is excited for the rest of us to join her. Just like when she was little, I think she would be yelling to us "I'm OK!!" But she's so much better than ok. I believe with all my heart, that if God gave her the choice to come back to earth, after being shown the glories of Heaven, as much as she loved her family, her friends and her life on earth, she would politely decline. Madison is home, she is in the place that she was created for.

21 years is such a short amount of time and we wish that we had so much longer with her here but what an incredible impact this beautiful young woman made on all of our lives. There are people that live 4 times as long as she did that don't touch as many lives as Madison did. We grieve for ourselves because we loved her so much and she leaves a Madison shaped hole in all of our hearts. But Madison's story isn't over. Her work on this earth is finished but her eternal life has just begun. Madison would tell you that she would want nothing more than for every person in this room to join her in Heaven, to give your lives to Jesus and guarantee that you will be with her at a celebration that never ends. Don't let this tragedy separate you from God, draw closer to Him than you ever have. He is the reason that we will spend eternity with Madison. And eternity is certainly far better than 21 years.

We can all continue to write Madison's story by living life like she did. Be kind to one another, check in on each other, pray for one another, talk about Madison, laugh about all of the fun you had with her. Make the world a better, smilier place. Find the fun in every day. Be someone's sunshine.

My favorite quote from The Wizard of Oz is when the wizard tells the Tin Man "and remember my sentimental friend, that a heart is not judged by how much you love, but by how much you are loved by others."

Madison Pearl, you were loved by everyone who had the privilege of knowing you and you loved with everything you had. There are no words to express how much you will be missed every single day until we are with you again and you will ALWAYS ALWAYS be our sunshine.