

ALAINA PETTY

Alaina Joann Petty was known for having two distinct sides to her. One was tough, sassy, determined and able to hold her own against anyone. The other was bright, bubbly and silly. Both, though, were equally loved by her friends and family and continue to be what they remember her for.

Born on Aug. 22, 2003 in Redmond, Washington, Alaina immediately loved making friends. She grew up doing a variety of activities, such as gymnastics, piano and dance for about three years. Within each of these activities and beyond them, her trustworthy and non-judgemental attitude allowed her to make friends quickly with almost anybody she met, even through the difficult transition of moving to Florida.

"She immediately had friends over almost every day," Alaina's brother Patrick Petty said. "Not only was she good at making friends, but she was good at keeping friends. She even still had friends from Washington."

Spending time with her friends in any capacity was one of her favorite things to do. From going to McDonalds to laughing in class, her friends meant the world to her. Her free spirited personality led her to spontaneously ask her friends to go on fun trips and adventures, using her sass and wit to cheer them up in any way she could.

"If I was in a bad mood, she would always just do whatever she could, some silly things, to cheer me up," freshman Julia Brighton said. "She just loved helping people and her friends. Honestly, she put everyone else's happiness over her own sometimes."

This vivacious attitude came naturally to Alaina, and she possessed it from a young age. Everything she took on she did so with such enthusiasm that it was contagious to those around her. Known as a girl with a smile on her face at all times, it was hard not to be happy when touched by her unwavering optimism.

"Sometimes I would get angry or annoyed at something, and she would just tell me to go outside and breathe in the fresh air and see the beautiful things in the world," Brighton said. "She used to always say to live every day like it was your last, and I think she did that."

Her determination in school and in extracurriculars also pushed her friends to be better. Everything she attempted, she did with fervor. She took honors classes, excelling in school, especially Spanish classes, and in her JROTC program. That passion and perseverance encouraged her friends to work just as hard.

"Early in the school year, we had to do a 5K run. She was so winded, but after it she went right to the guy in charge and said 'alright, what's next?' That's the kind of person she was," freshman Tomás Valdiviria said. "She pushed me to go that extra mile. And she wouldn't just help me up when I fell, she taught me how to pick myself up next time."

From an early age, she looked up to her siblings, Patrick, Meghan and Ian Petty, immensely. From trying on Meghan's clothes constantly to emulating Patrick's sarcasm and his love for the United States to reflecting Ian's unconditional love, each

of her siblings influenced her personality in unique yet equally visible ways.

"When she was younger, she was always copying me — wearing my old clothes and copying my mannerisms," Meghan said. "And I used to think that it was annoying. But now, I think about it, and I'm just so honored because she was such a good person, and yet she still wanted to be like me."

She especially bonded with her brother Patrick over their dedication to the JROTC program. From the moment she started JROTC camp this past summer, she was extremely committed to the program and all those within it. As a member of the Raiders team and the color guard, the class and club were her favorite place to be.

"She would always make sure her uniform was just perfect, not because she she had to, but because she wanted to, and she cared about it that much," Brighton said. "She would drag me to all of the events because she always wanted to be there to help. There was nothing she loved more than that class."

Not only was Alaina passionate about JROTC, but also she worked harder than almost anybody in the room to prove it. By spending hours practicing with the after school teams and presenting herself as a leader in the classroom, Alaina was recognized as a valuable asset within the club early on — someone who had a definite future in moving up the chain of command. In a class often dominated by male students, Alaina held her own and made a place for herself.

"She was a go-getter, no doubt about it," JROTC teacher First Sgt. John Navarra said. "She was pleasantly aggressive I would say. She wasn't afraid of expressing her determination, of thinking outside of the box, of beating to her own drum... But her drive wasn't selfish, it was kind of like 'let's all be better together.'"

Alaina's enduring devotion to the class did not go unnoticed, as she was promoted to sergeant, the highest rank a freshman could achieve, and was awarded the Cadet of the Month award during the second quarter, beating out competitors of all grade levels within the program. From then on, the whole class would joke that Alaina would most certainly end up as the battalion commander by her senior year, commanding over the entirety of the program as the highest rank a high schooler could achieve. The Raiders team captain would even reportedly say that if Alaina kept up the good work, she would put him out of a job.

"She came in with such professionalism, such curiosity... both in and out of uniform. From the moment she walked into this room, she was destined to be a leader in this program... She was more than a participating cadet, she wanted to do everything," Major Peter Mahmood said.

Alaina showed a similar dedication to her faith. As a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, she took her duty to her faith seriously. She participated often at her church, going there after school on Tuesdays for youth group and frequently participating in trips with them. These trips were often community service-based, which was

something that Alaina found great pride in doing.

After Hurricane Irma devastated parts of the Keys and South Florida, Alaina worked through multiple weekends to improve the lives of those affected by it. She, along with her brother, dedicated their time not for the recognition, but for the knowledge of the difference they were making in the lives of others.

"She was happiest when she was helping others," Meghan Petty said. "She would spend her weekends going to soup kitchens and just doing things that helped others' lives, and she loved it more than anything. She felt the most comfortable I think when she was sweating, working hard and making a difference."

Through her camping trips she often took with her church youth group, Alaina began to love nature and animals. In times of stress, nature became a place of solace for her — a place that demonstrated the beauty in the world. Her love for her two dogs, Diego and Leo, demonstrated this love. She would nonstop talk to her friends about her dogs, posting pictures on social media to prove it.

"Her Snapchat stories were just full of pictures of her dogs," Valdiviria said. "She loved those things more than anything in the world. She just spent all the time in the world with them and would talk to me all the time in class about them."

When she wasn't selflessly devoting her time to others, Alaina loved to de-stress with a good crime show — "Psych" and "Bones" among her favorites. Her siblings and her would sit around after school and watch, just spending the time they could together.

Whether she was doing homework or driving, Alaina's life never ceased to have a tune behind it. Shower time usually turned into a match between Meghan and Alaina over who could play their music the loudest on the portable speaker. Some of her favorites included songs by Camila Cabello and other variations of Hispanic pop music.

"She never didn't have music on," Meghan said. "She especially loved Spanish music — bachata music like I liked. She knew some songs that I didn't even know, though; it was crazy... I don't think she realized how good she actually was at speaking Spanish."

Often, she was eating ramen whenever she could. Her parents even got her her own chopsticks for Christmas as a joke because she ate it so much. If it wasn't ramen or a mid-day Chick-Fil-A run, Alaina loved to stay home and cook a family dinner with her mother. She was getting to be a better chef every day, according to Patrick.

In all aspects of Alaina's life, she loved unconditionally and with her entire being. If she was passionate about something, which she was about many things, she would make it a priority to be the best at it, not for personal gain, but for the gain of those she could help in the process. Her selflessness and love touched those all around her, and she will be missed by the entirety of the Eagle community and many of those beyond it. *Story by Rebecca Schneid; photos courtesy of Meghan Petty and Hannah Beardall*



“She wasn't afraid of expressing her determination, of thinking outside of the box, of beating to her own drum... But her drive wasn't selfish.”

