

# A Tribute to a Special Friend

Taylor from Holy Cross High School  
DMV Teen Advisory Council Member

Do you have a special friend that you could trust with your life? One that no matter the mistakes you make or have made, you'll never be judged? Time or distances that separate you will never matter, she still loves you? I have had that privilege and lost this person on October 4, 2007.

At age eight going to an Aaron Carter concert was such a big deal! To add to the excitement my Aunt arranged to have a limo drive us to the theater. My cousins and I were all dressed alike for this fun filled event.

I can still close my eyes and see her standing in the doorway. She was wearing a jean skirt, black leather boots and a shirt just like ours! She looked as though she was shy, nervous and excited all at the same time. I remember thinking, who is this girl and why is she coming with us? As the night went on it was as if I had known Jess forever, and she was my best friend. The spark of our personalities was immediate. I knew when she jumped out of her seat and danced as if no one was watching in the aisle to Candy Girl, that she was special.

The distance of our hometowns kept us apart until the summer of 2007, when we were reunited. I was hanging out with a friend from my new high school and she asked if I would like to go to a bonfire with her. I was so excited to hear that it was at Jess' house because I had not seen her in more than five years!

Looking back now I am thankful to our common friend Erica for bringing us back together. I realize what a gift that summer was. When we arrived at her house, it was as if there had been no gap of time between us. From then on we spent every day having sleepovers, going to the movies and visiting friends at parties. She immediately became my best friend. As Jess logged in her computer picture files . . . it was the "best summer ever."

I remember she went back to school before me. When it came time for me to start, I found it hard to fall asleep at night. One time I even called Jess to have her tell me a bed time story, pathetic right?! Fourteen-year-old girls on the phone telling each other bedtime stories, I laughed so hard that night that tears were coming out of my eyes. Jess told me a story based on our everyday lives, with names from childhood characters.

Things between us became more distant once school started and we were both involved in cheerleading. Despite the time that we did not talk, I loved Jess all the same.

On October 3<sup>rd</sup>, I was online and saw that Jess logged on instant messenger. I wanted so badly to IM her, but I didn't, to this day I don't know why. I actually had her message box open and closed out of it. The next morning all I thought about was her and my other friend, Tham. She was also on IM the night before. I sat in home room thinking to myself that I wanted to text Jess as soon as I had time between classes. I wanted to tell her how much I missed her and wanted to hang out soon.

When I walked from my first class to my second, I could see my teacher in the doorway talking to someone in a very serious manner. He turned to me and said that I needed to go and see Mrs. Casey. Being new to this school, I had no idea who she was and even though I knew I did nothing wrong, I was sure I was in trouble for something. When I walked in her office, she

quickly reassured me that I was not in any trouble but she had to wait until Erica arrived to talk to us together. Now I really thought we were in trouble, I wish I was. Instead I was facing the most heart wrenching experience of my life.

When Erica walked in, she sat us down and closed the door. I could see that she was feeling uneasy as she informed us of a car accident that had taken place that morning in Wolcott. She further informed us that our friends, Anthony and Jessica Apruzzese, had died. As we sat there in shock, I received a text only to find out that another of our friends, Thamara Correa, had also passed in this accident. This all plays over so vividly in my mind daily. I could tell you whom I passed in the halls before it happened, who hugged me, stood at my locker with me . . .

The next few days were horrifying. I had to go to the wakes and funerals of three amazing people, all under the age of 18. I had to stand in a cemetery and watch three caskets drop into the ground knowing that they contained the bodies of my friends. Tham had the best personality, she loved children, played several sports, and was proud of her heritage. She was a Brazilian born beauty with the looks of a super model.

Anthony, Jess's brother, also known as Ant, was not only good looking but also a charmer. His amazing personality was sure to help while he was on the road to a career with his music.

Jessica Faith, was the most beautiful girl you could ever imagine inside and out. Her smile was radiant, you couldn't help but want to be around her. She was proud to be a Varsity Cheerleader as an incoming Freshman as well as an incredible Dancer.

All three lost in one irretrievable second.

As a teenager I know the feeling of being invincible. We have all told our parents not to worry we have things in control. Well I am here to say we are not. My friends are one of many examples of this epidemic. I will also tell you losing someone like that feels like someone has ripped your heart out.

The leading causes of motor vehicle accidents are speeding, driving under the influence, and being distracted. No one likes to think that they will finally have the independence to drive a car at 16, but cannot share the fun with a friend in the car.

We are only given one life to live, be more aware of yourself and your friends. Don't mess up because mistakes like this cannot be taken away. As the driver do you want to be the survivor of a tragedy? As a passenger if you are uneasy, demand to get out of the car.

These three died one year ago and the pain is still as fresh today, it can eat you away. In losing a friend, you think of how you could have done better, ways you could have been a better friend.

One also thinks of how they cannot do anything about it now. Do not pick on people, don't hold grudges, try to live by treating everyone the way you would like to be treated. You never know when something is going to happen.

In the year 2007, Anthony, Jessica and Thamara joined thirteen other teens that died in car crashes in Connecticut. The count for 2008 is already 16. A number like 16 doesn't seem like much, but look around and imagine one, two or maybe even three of your friends could be a part of this growing statistic. Being catapulted from a car, demolished by someone speeding or

under the influence of drugs or alcohol, or simply laughing and having a good time with friends and loud music, this is reality.

It seems unimaginable, I know, while I spent the summer riding a roller coaster with Jess or playing basketball with Tham, I would have never imagined, it happens.

Making the wrong choices can cost you not only your life but cost the lives of so many others. I know how difficult this last year has been for my friends and me. The parents and families have to go on. Life without their loved ones, they feel that pain daily.

I'm hoping all who read this will take my letter for every bit that it is worth, don't take your chances.

Today I wish I had someone to tell me a bedtime story to change my tears of pain to laughter.

"I love you to heaven and back"

Love Always and Forever,  
Taylor (from Holy Cross High School)  
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