

## Thanks

I'm humbled by the strength of your friendship with Meagan.

She lives in our memories. It means so much to our family that you cherish her memory.

Asking me to speak today

Working on the library

Grounds around the stone house

In order, I'm speaking as best I can for

Meagan

Julie and Emma Margerum-Leys, Meagan's mom  
and sister

Myself

## The Fairlee Diner,

in Fairlee, Vermont, has a hundred or so antique signs lining the walls. Tractors, motor oil, treatments for ailments no one ever knew existed.

On one tin sign is lettered the ultimate false promise: "Free lunch tomorrow."

Not only is there no free lunch (sorry to disappoint) but.

...

...tomorrow stands where it has always stood, just out of reach.

Don't wait

To appreciate what you have

To be your best self

To give of yourself to others

## A little background on Meagan

Joined Cindy Wilson's class in sixth grade

Was a Steiner kid in grades six through nine

Loved to

Sing (constantly)

Read

Write

Be with friends

Ride her bicycle

Had her own sense of who she was

Had a sharp wit, strong opinions, and judgments about what she saw around her

Loved her family and loved her friends

Loved life

Before February of 2003, she was a healthy kid leading an interesting life

Born March 16, 1989 in New Hampshire,

Lived in Vermont, California, and here

One of the most intelligent people I've ever met

At her memorial, one of you (Anna?) said "She could have run for president. . . I'd have voted for her."

February 24, 2003 she was diagnosed with a brain stem tumor

June 21, 2004, just after school let out for the summer, the day after Father's Day, Meagan died in the Pediatric Intensive Care Unit at U of M

In a sense, she graduated early.

Many of you were there for her burial and/or her memorial service

I've missed her a thousand times a day, every day since.

## Meagan is here

For our family

I feel her presence when a soft wind blows

There's an empty seat here today. For Julie and Emma and me there will be always be an empty seat

For you

John Donne said (gender references updated)

"All humankind is of one author, and is one volume; when one person dies, one chapter is not torn out of the book, but translated into a better language; and every chapter must be so translated...As therefore the bell that rings to a sermon, calls not upon the preacher only, but upon the congregation to come: so this bell calls us all:...No person is an island, entire of itself...any person's death diminishes me, because I am involved in humankind; and therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee."

We do not live one at a time, we live together

We have to carry each other forward

For the sake of others

For our own sake

**We live in each other's memories.**

**We honor each other by living well and by remembering**

## **Don't wait**

### **Appreciate what you have**

Meagan was diagnosed in February. She went through six weeks of radiation treatment. By summer she felt pretty much like herself again. From that point on, she drank in life. She sought out experiences of beauty. More importantly, she saw the beauty in what and who was around her.

**Really see the beauty all around you**

**Understand that you and everyone you know is imperfect, but that each of you has some spark of perfection.**

**There is *something* there to appreciate.**

**If you have troubles**

**Acknowledge them**

**Put them in perspective**

*Doesn't mean to minimize them. Being cold, hungry, broke, lonely. . . sucks.*

*But things can get better*

*And challenges can help you to be strong.*

In Meagan's journal, she wrote: "The only thing that sucked about yesterday was that my right side was weird again and I had a lot of trouble walking over the rocky ground. We saw this guy—he was older too—with one leg and two walking sticks making his way up the rocky hill. It was totally amazing and just made me stand back and realize how lucky I am, even though I'm still not functioning like I used to. Will this experience make me slightly more ambidextrous than others? I have to use my left hand for things I never used to, like brushing my teeth and putting on sunscreen."

### **Be your best self**

**Today. It's the only day we can be sure we have.**

**We always have some of it.**

**We can always spend the rest of today as best we know how**

**It's always today.**

**The biblical book of Leviticus has a whole series of commandments, not just the Ten we refer to**

commonly. They're pretty good: Regardless of your religious beliefs, they're worth a look. Leviticus Chapter 19, Verse 16: "lo ta'amod" You shall not stand idly by.

If there's trouble, help fix it.

If there's something about you that you wish were better, get a move on.

### Give of what you have

The Make-a-Wish foundation sent us on a cruise. On the cruise ship, Meagan spent an afternoon as The Mardi Gras fairy. She wrote: "I strolled around giving kids all my arcade tokens that Royal Caribbean gave me when we got onboard. It was so cool, because the arcade tokens were gold, so it was like giving pirate money away. Most kids looked surprised or shocked then they received their token, but there's hope for humanity's future because almost everyone said thank you."

### Meagan's journal ends

With the words "But that means" and a blank page

I don't think she meant to leave the thought hanging, but she did

So it's up to us to decide what it means

And to think a bit about what it might have meant to her

### Gift

Pass the hat. Take two coins

A gift

Give one away as part of a gift to someone who needs it more than you do.

Carry it with you for a bit; the right time will present itself.

Give it along with something of your own and think of Meagan as you do so.

### Independence

There are a lot of things that Meagan didn't get to do.

Dance at prom,  
get her driver's license,  
graduate from high school.

Most importantly, Meagan never got to be really independent.

Make the other dollar part of something you do which puts your flag on top of the hill.

I don't know what that will be for you. I wouldn't presume to tell you.

I don't know what it would have been for Meagan  
But as you spend it, think "This is who I am as an independent person."

## Close

### First draft version

### Past, present, future

#### Your parents, families, and teachers (and me)

See you as an aggregation of your past

Layers on layers of

*Babies who can put their whole fist in their mouth  
(demonstrate)*

*Purple galoshes with googly eyes*

*Eighth grade projects*

*First dates*

*Spring concerts*

#### Your friends see your present

"I hope you have a great summer" they write in your yearbook

Twenty years from now, that'll bring a wry smile as you try to remember whether you did or not

But for now it's the right thing

#### All of us look to your future

I go running with Emma some mornings. At the end of the run, she usually blasts off and sprints to the end. Thirty years older and nearly twice as large, I kinda amble to the end.

Your destiny is to run on ahead of us

That's as it should be

I will always see Meagan running among you

She, and I, expect great things of you, but not the impossible.

We expect you to appreciate what is around you, to be your best self today, and to give what you can.

If you think of each other and think of her, she and you will live on.

Thanks for this opportunity, thanks for being a friend to Meagan and to our family.