

Carrie Downey Shoemaker

C*arrie Downey Shoemaker* was a many faceted young lady that epitomized a commitment to excellence. She was all about “paying it forward.”

To her family, she was the person they all, including her parents, wanted to grow up to be. Somehow she exemplified the combined best traits of all of us. From the first grade through her senior year in high school, she never received a grade lower than an “A.” But she always had time to help her brothers and sisters, whether it was reading to them, assisting with their schoolwork, or helping them to learn bible verses for Sunday school and church youth groups. She daily lived what “better” could be.

***Duke University** was a beloved home to her. A member of a military family, her time at Duke equaled the single longest time she ever lived anywhere. In her 23 years with us in this life, she lived in 12 places. She attended three high schools and moved between her junior and senior years, pre-designated as her class valedictorian at the end of her junior year and becoming a National Merit Scholar...and she lettered in three sports. She graduated in May 2000 and returned to Duke for Homecoming that same year. Her heart was there. She received a double major in **Electrical and Biomedical Engineering** in only four years while only taking one summer course. A twin in a family of five brothers and sisters, she attended college on a Naval ROTC scholarship because that was the only way she and her family could afford it. After her death we learned that, in a year and a half, she had already saved \$3,000 of her meager Ensign’s salary for her youngest sister’s college education.*

*All the while she was already “paying it forward.” At Duke she played college soccer, but found time in an engineer’s, athlete’s, and ROTC student’s schedule to coach a children’s soccer team. She compassionately and quietly helped a friend and fellow student through a serious battle with anorexia. While at a **Navy School** at Newport, Rhode Island, she noticed the building janitor was coming to work in the winter and shivering without a jacket. She learned he was a Central American immigrant with a large family. Carrie went out after school that evening and bought the man a jacket, wrapped it in gift paper, and left it for him anonymously. When her seamen had to paint the ships mast after duty hours, she bought them pizza at night. While assigned to the All-Navy women’s soccer team and undergoing two-a-day practices, she went to her ship early in the morning and returned late at night so others would not have to assume her duties. She was a **Christian lay leader** on her ship. Carrie volunteered to be the officer in charge of burials at sea for departed sailors of earlier generations.*

*A little over a month after 9-11-2001, her ship the **USS Milius (DDG-69)** was preparing for deployment and guarding the air corridors in the Pacific Northwest. On a rare evening in port and having just qualified as a Surface Warfare Officer (SWO), Carrie and her shipmates were enjoying a night off in Everett, WA. While crossing a street, a drunk driver with a BAC three times the legal limit ran her down. The driver fled and crashed into a resident’s front yard, where he was detained by witnesses until the police arrived.*

We hope that you will join us in supporting the great loves of Carrie’s life, Duke, educational achievement, and NROTC; supporting Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) and their tireless vigilance in preventing these senseless tragedies and supporting victims’ families; and honoring Carrie in a way we know she will look down upon us and be proud. And by doing so, keep her memory and life’s loves vibrant and alive. We are truly thankful, humbled, and inspired by your continued support and look forward to seeing you on April 9th.



— Mike, Dee Dee, Michael, Matthew, Kendahl and Ashley Shoemaker