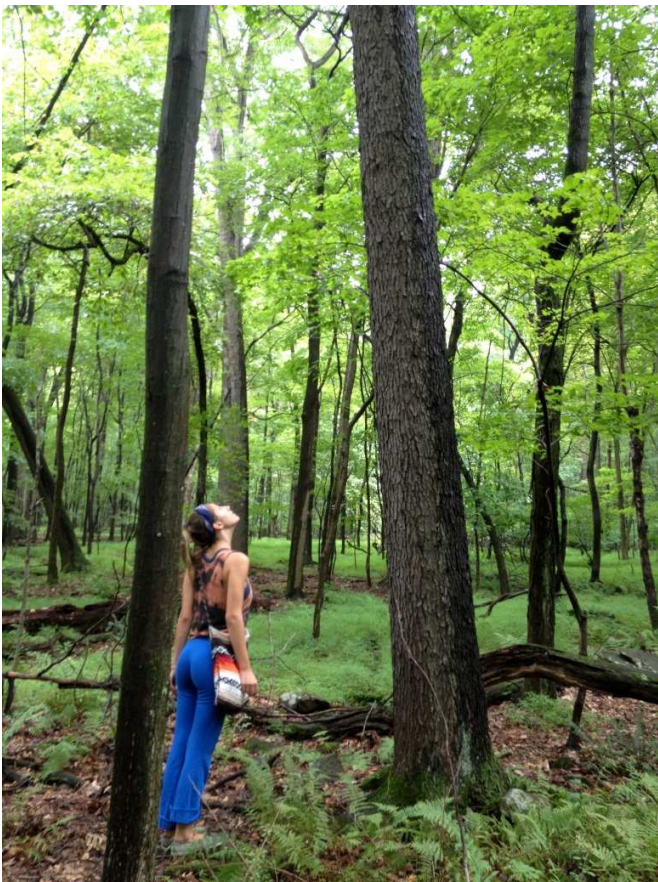




"Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees..." - Revelations 7:3

With inspiration from Emma,

We live in a beautiful world. Many of us take it for granted and don't fully grasp the impact that man has had on the gifts given to us. Our Emma loved her Mother Earth and endeavored to reduce her impact by her actions and no doubt would have helped to compensate for others when given the chance. She loved the outdoors and is one of the only people that I know that spent more time 'looking up' at the beauty of our natural world, rather than engaging in the manmade world around us. She was clearly a Tree Hugger.



Natural settings were a passion and she had a 'favorite' spot that she just called 'The Creek' which was a short 5 minute drive from our home. 'The Creek' was Emma's personal safe haven, a slice of nature that she would go to and meditate, paint or photograph - but mainly just enjoy. This place has been a source of comfort for Emma's mother since her passing, even though the winter is upon us, it still serves as a special place to our family because it was so much a part of Emma.

The Creek is where her Senior Pictures were taken, her dear friend Matt was the photographer and loved the beauty of the setting. We will forever cherish these pictures.



Emma and our dear friend Annie spent many a day hiking in the nature around our home and we received and treasure this picture that Annie snapped for us. Emma got the 'big picture' of life and was infatuated with the natural creations of this world.

And sharing some of the love that has poured in,

Because nature and sustainability were so important to Emma, We thought it fitting to make a financial donation in her name to the "National Forest Foundation". Formed in 1991, this foundation is dedicated to help fulfill the US Forest Service's mission to "maintain the health, diversity and productivity of the nation's forests and grasslands". During her short time at VCU, Emma learned that you could 'Intern' with the US Forest Service as a 'Ranger' during the summer and this was on her 'list' of projects during school breaks.

The beauty of youth is... that they believe nothing is out of their reach.



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Emma's struggle during her first summer break would have been to decide which of her possible projects would have been what she pursued. We could have seen her as an intern as part of the US Forest Service internship program, the fact that these were unpaid made no difference to her. Money wasn't important to her. Nature was.

Our family lives within 100 miles of the edge of the Allegheny National Forest, yet we have never visited. The gift we made in Emma's honor will help to ensure that these national treasures are well kept to provide a glimpse of natural beauty to Americans across the nation. Planting trees and caring for their growth is such a simple way to feed the nature that is all around us.

I can see a trip to the forest in our future.

And a little of our own,

While the National Forests and all their beauty can be 'visited', there is a balance needed in all communities between development and urbanization and the natural world. The 'Concrete Jungle' can coexist with the forest if given the chance. Even though she loved the natural world, Emma was drawn to the city and chose VCU for its close ties to the urban setting in Richmond Virginia. Because of this, it seemed fitting for our family to make a donation to "Our City Forest" to help in their mission to cultivate 'appreciation, protection, growth and maintenance of our urban ecosystem, especially our urban forest.'



Our City Forest is based in San Jose, where Emma's 'sister cousin' Meredith lives - an area of the country that she loved. California is such a beautiful state full of so much natural beauty and diversity, which is no doubt why she loved to visit whenever able.

An 'Urban Forest' is a forest or collection of trees that grow within a city - the blending of the city with nature. While pleasing to the eye, a forest within a city does more than appeal to our senses. The forest helps moderate local climate by helping filter air, water and sunlight - and provide shelter for animals and recreational area for the locals.

There is a growing understanding in many countries of the importance of the natural ecology in the urban setting.

Organizations like 'Our City Forest' and 'Tree Pittsburgh' to name a few are at the heart of making strides in helping to strike a better balance.





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And some action on our part

Because winter in the Northeast doesn't lend itself to tree planting, we called upon our California family to assist with the 3rd leg of our project. The Munson's of Los Gatos (40 minutes south of San Francisco) volunteered with San Jose's Our City Forest and a group of other locals to plant trees in the downtown area of the city. This organization helps with urban (environmental) renewal, but also assists homeowners in their own quest to give back to nature in their own setting.

We thought of planting trees in Pittsburgh in December in the 1 or 2 'decent' weather days we may be offered, but our West Coast operation was up to the task of helping locally. San Jose averages temperatures in the 60's with good chance of precipitation (rain) dramatically improving the chances of success for a tree planting effort.

Just before Christmas, our team joined forces with other California locals to plant more than a dozen trees in downtown San Jose. It was clear that there's more to planting trees than just digging a hole, and Our City Forest spends time with the volunteers to pass on the keys to success, and then turns them loose to get their hands dirty.



Our team of 4 planted 4 trees – a good start by any measure. Just think what our world would be like if each of us planted just 1 tree each year. Once spring breaks we plan to plant a few trees at 'The Creek' and in a special memorial garden that we plan for Emma in our yard.

For the volunteer activities that we plan to do to continue Emma's legacy our ultimate goal is to both include Youth (The Future!) as well as leave a trail for others to follow and act on their own. Doing whatever they believe will make the world a better place.



This project helped give us comfort in the knowing that because of your and our donations, not only will our National Treasures continue to be looked after and made ready for visitors, but that at least a small stretch of San Fernando Street in downtown San Jose will move a little bit closer to peaceful coexistence with the nature that supports us all.

Our team left a sign marking their efforts in remembrance of our Sweet Emma Elizabeth, and vowed to continue to help support the Mother Earth that she so desperately loved.

For our part, we have a new mission to try to limit our impact on nature and recognize the beauty of the forest – both in the wild and in our cities.



Be the change you wish to see in the world

-Much Love from our family to yours

*Denise, Michael,
Alec, Olivia and Noah (*And our angel Emma)*