

## “A Life Touched”

By

Ashley Kay Drew

I know funerals aren't people's favorite place to be, but I urge you, take off your watches, stop tapping your feet, and relax and enjoy listening to and celebrating Ashley's life, with us.

As I look around I see a lot of different faces, different ages, backgrounds, probably different beliefs and faith. But one think we do have in common, is that we all have “A Life Touched” by Ashley.

Ashley came into our life Monday afternoon September 5<sup>th</sup>, 1994. Labor Day. From the moment she was born, she was a blessing.

One of Ashley's favorite items as a child was a special book 'Playtime'. Mom would read to her for what seemed like hours and she never grew tired of sitting in Mom's lap and hearing her voice read story after story.

Most children learn to crawl when they are around six months old. Not Ashley, she developed in her time when she was ready. There

wasn't a need to crawl when her books were right next to her. However, one time while she was playing with her cousin Bryce a small bowl of dry Kix cereal was knocked over. Ashley saw the Kix on the floor and wanted some. So she decided now is the time to crawl before Bryce gets them all.

There were other things Ashley did not wait for. She was talking early and not just single words but whole sentences. Although she still enjoyed having Mom read a book to her, it became apparent that Ashley couldn't wait for the words to come out and instead started reading to Mom.

One day someone new came along. Her first 'girl' cousin, Jessica. The girls outnumber the boys was Ashley's thought. So many days they spent sharing special moments together.

Ashley had the opportunity to go to preschool with her cousin Bryce. It was the same preschool her Uncle Dave attended. She was fortunate that her Auntie Sharmon was able to take her each day while Mom was at work. There were times Ashley would just watch as her Uncle Jeff would play and wrestle with her cousins Bryce and Jessica. Then suddenly Uncle Jeff would grab her and

swing her into motion with the rest of them. The smiles and giggles were enough to know how much fun she was having!

Of course there was Uncle Dave. She never knew what to expect from him! She had the opportunity of seeing him every day for several years. And Uncle Dave had the opportunity of spoiling her to pieces. He also took the opportunity to teach Ashley how to break the rules that Mom had set, such as bed time! They would run all over the house and play. Ashley would just giggle and scream with enjoyment, which isn't very productive for bedtime.

Auntie Sharmon wasn't left out either. There was one thing Ashley would never experience with Mom so Auntie Sharmon needed to make sure she had ample practice. Auntie Sharmon taught Ashley how to dunk Oreo's in her milk. Ashley thought it was the best and Auntie Sharmon was always there to clean it up!

Ashley had a wonderful opportunity to be a flower girl in her favorite Uncle's wedding. Uncle Dave! What a spectacular day! Ashley gained a new Aunt that day. Amy had style and always knew exactly what gifts to pick for Ashley on her birthday and Christmas.

A little while later came her next cousin, Jonathan. Unfortunately it was not a girl! However, she loved him and shared many special times. She gave many of her favorite toys to Jonathan. She was grooming him for a pinochle partner along with Bryce and Jessica.

Ashley loved school so much. When she started kindergarten one class wasn't enough. She went to both morning and afternoon kindergarten. One of her teachers was also her Mom's kindergarten teacher.

This is the same time when Ashley began sharing her love with those she didn't know. Ashley and Mom would spend at least one Saturday per month at church packing sack lunches for others in need. For Ashley that was not enough! She thought the brown bags were too plain. So she took it upon herself to decorate white lunch bags to be filled and handed out.

Ashley developed many friendships in kindergarten. One friendship that was late blooming continued on and is very special. Abby and Ashley became very close friends. Not only were they close in age but they shared a common bond. Horses! They would spend hours playing with their Breyer horses. They would pack suitcases back and forth between houses. Uncle Gregg would have

to help with all of the luggage and even keep the horses corralled at Halloween when they dressed up as jockeys to ride War Admiral and Sea Biscuit. They even spent time with Ashley's grandma making blankets for their little horses. It was so hard to find a Breyer Horse for a present that she didn't already have.

The next person to come into Ashley's life would impact her life beyond imagination. God blessed Ashley and Mom with a new special friend, Nick. Nick is Abby's cousin and her Mom, Aunt Janet loved to be Miss Match Maker. The friendship continued to grow. It grew so much that soon when Mom and Ashley would get home from school, Ashley would start asking when Nick would get there. It was amazing to watch. They would play cards together, play computer games, and play outside and at the park. They would watch movies – oh did Nick learn about Pokemon!

One beautiful day Ashley, Mom and Nick went to Oaks Park. Ashley loved amusement park rides. The day was filled with fun. Later they all went to a park where Nick asked both Ashley and Mom if he could be a permanent part of their lives by marrying Mom and being a life long friend to Ashley. Mom would not answer. Ashley had to say yes before Mom would even consider

the question. What was her answer? It was an immediate yes with pure joy, excitement and that irresistible smile.

Nick of course set to work on finding the perfect vows for the wedding. It was not a wedding of two. It was a wedding of three. For when Nick married he was blessed with two girls, a wife and a special child.

Nick was attending OHSU for his master's degree. Realizing early that Ashley and Mom needed him more than the world needed another master's student, he quickly dropped those studies in favor of a more 'applied' course. For it was his desire to be a great Dad!

As Ashley continued to grow, her love for horses continued to emerge. She started taking riding lessons from the same trainer her Mom had when she was young. Soon after, she was able to convince several of her friends to play 'horse' on recess. Of course Ashley was the 'queen' horse. One Christmas her Uncle Barry and Aunt Katrina gave her a Rainbow stick horse. They had no idea what they started. When friends would come over to Ashley's house for a play date they would all mount stick horses, frolic through the field and over the jumps.

Ashley was blessed with fabulous teachers, administrators and staff from the different schools she attended. So many touched her life in ways that are indescribable. Ashley developed special relationships with each teacher. Of course that was after they learned that her quick comebacks and witty responses was her way of communicating to adults on their level. Ashley learned quickly to be patient and allow her fellow classmates to answer questions. After checking to ensure others had the opportunity to answer, Ashley would then raise her hand to offer the answer. Her friends, and even Mom and Dad would look for her to be their dictionary and spell checker. However, there was one teacher in Ashley's life that went above and beyond not just what a teacher, but any person would do. This special teacher, Mrs. Ralene Young, took the time to gallop through the gym with her and pretend to be a horse. Second grade turned into a pivotal year for Ashley. Mrs. Young was able to connect with her in a way that no other person could. Thank you Mrs. Young, for sharing not just one year with Ashley, but each of the last six years of her life. If you were one of the lucky ones to see Ashley recently you have probably heard her say "Good Morning Sunshine", or "I Love You, Sunshine".

The trip to Disneyland in celebration of Mom and Dad's wedding also included a special event for Ashley, the horse lover. Medevil

Times is a special performance of knights jousting on horseback. Ashley's hero was the black and white knight. Of the entire audience this knight selected Ashley as his special princess and gave her a rose.

One Christmas Ashley, Mom and Dad took a trip with Dad's family to Black Butte Ranch. Grandma Linda made sure we had everything to make our holiday perfect. She even had table clothes and napkins for all. That meant that Grandpa Ross has learned over the years to pack everything just so and the all important words – "yes dear". Aunt Joanna brought everything so paper stockings could be made by all. Ashley, Abby and Kyle had a fabulous time. Carlos was busy reading and studying for school. Of course anyone with a book held a special place in Ashley's heart.

One evening at an open house during grade school, Ashley learned about Girl Scouts. She was excited to start earning her badges. Little did she know that she would be a girl scout for so many years? Her troop worked on badges, service projects and of course selling Girl Scouts cookies. One of the last events she participated in was a special badge learning about disabilities held right here in our church. She was able to have her Uncle Dave serve as tour



guide for the fire station while she helped fellow Girl Scouts have safe passage between the church and the station. Ashley's troop 1178 were more than just Girl Scouts. They were sisters. One moment they would be playing practical jokes on each other, while the next they wouldn't speak to one another, then they would be just like old friends.

Ashley had the opportunity to travel many places. Mom and Ashley would go to the beach with Grandma. They took a road trip to Montana. Ashley's love for books always allowed for fabulous entertainment. Her first plane ride was to Ohio to see her Auntie Marian and Uncle Dennis. She continued her traveling to Disneyland, Tronto Canada, Hawaii – twice, Orlando to see Disney World, Ohio again, and Arizona – The Lazy River was her favorite! Ashley was even able to attend her Grandma's family reunion in Fresno, man was that hot, at her Uncle Cliff and Aunt Gladys' house. The pool was sooo much fun. During a trip to Boca Raton, Ashley and Dad enjoyed their time together playing life-size chess, eating French fries and watching for falling coconuts.

Ashley and her family took a long weekend trip to Grandpa Chuck and Greta's house. She wasn't sure if there would be any playtime

but she knew she would be able to read books because Greta shares her love for reading. What she didn't expect was to have races against her Dad with motorized wheelchairs. Who would have thought wheelchairs would be so much fun!

Ashley was not an animal lover. However, horses she loved beyond imagination. Ashley found her first horse when she was nine. Of course not just any one would do. The one she found was a hop, skip and a jump away (a four hour drive, wait in line at the dock, and a one hour ferry ride). Ashley called this horse her 'perfect pony'. And she was. Summer, her pony, was a one of a kind horse for a one of a kind girl. She and Ashley shared so many memories together. They both loved to race around the arena, which of course scared Mom. One of her many desires was to be a jockey. After the running of the Belmont Stakes this year she even verified, of course, that she was short enough and light enough to be a jockey. Ashley and Mom enjoyed many hours and days of riding and showing their horses together; while Dad enjoyed watching the bond between Mom and daughter, and horses and riders grow. While Ashley enjoyed jumping she soon desired to stay closer to the ground. So she wanted to try Dressage. She found Palladio, her next horse. However, she was not closer to the ground. Ashley and Mom often refer to Palladio as their gentle

giant, so tall yet such kind, sweet, loving eyes just like Ashley's. They developed a wonderful bond that only they would share. When Ashley was not able to go to the barn and Mom would stop by, Palladio would look at Mom and his eyes seemed to say, "where is my sweet, little girl? I am waiting for her." Ashley lost a button at the last horse show she competed in. It was found nearby but there wasn't any thread or needle. So her wonderful vet came to the rescue by taking her suture material and securing her button so she could compete in her next class. Ashley qualified at this same horse show for state finals in Dressage with Palladio.

Ashley loved her horses, and all those that are a part of the barn where our horses are stabled. She started taking lessons five years ago with David. Initially they must have thought she was a quiet little girl. It didn't take long for David to find that "quiet" was not the right word to describe Ashley. They had many phenomenal moments together during lessons, shows and just being around the barn. Ashley made special friendships at the barn one in particular early on, was with another girl, Danielle. Ashley and Danielle were able to take lessons together and hang out at horse shows. Ashley had a special gift to be able to connect with both children and adults. She enjoyed all of our barn buddies. As Ashley transitioned from jumping to dressage she would need to make a

change from her usual trainer David to Wendy. Ashley and Mom had gone to one dressage show while Ashley still had her pony Summer. At these shows they have the option of checking the equipment you use such as your saddle, bridle and bit to ensure it complies with the rules. Ashley had finished her third class and had a bit check. She passed. She then finished her fourth class and the head inspector started looking for her trainers. They were still watching Mom. As Mom left the ring everyone was trying to find out what was wrong and why the head inspector had a hold of Ashley's horse. The inspector explained how Ashley had an illegal bit in her horse's mouth. While this bit was legal for her to use at jumping shows it was not legal to use at dressage shows. Here is the best part. As David came up to see what was going on, it was explained to him that she had the wrong bit. Of course David said he was not the dressage trainer and it was Wendy. So when Wendy walked up she said I don't train Ashley, David does. They allowed the bit to slide since Ashley had been previously told it was okay. This story was one of Ashley's favorites. She was retelling it just three weeks ago at her last dressage show. She enjoyed riding with both David and Wendy, and knew that one, would always be there for her.

The last two years Ashley had the opportunity to attend a summer camp at the University of Oregon. She was able to experience many of the exciting pieces of college, living in dorm rooms, not having to listen to Mom and Dad, going to classes, hanging out with new friends, the U of O book store, campus food (needless to say Ashley stopped by Dairy Queen frequently). Mid-way through the camp Mom and Dad would come by to pick Ashley up for the day. The first stop was The Pancake House for ‘real food’, then off for some shopping and finally a stop at the park for peace and quiet time, to read and relax before going back to the buzz of her new friends.

Ashley was blessed with many cousins that touched her life. They each have many stories to tell. There is one cousin that is much like Ashley. Jeremiah is quiet, soft spoken, constantly thinking, dreaming, listening and shares a love of horses and chocolate.

Gabriel – one of the youngest, only four is very bouncy and active. Ashley always thought it was too hard to read with a bouncy Tigger chattering all of the time.

Ashley was blessed with many more cousins. Isa shares her love of horses. There is something special about a bond between a girl

and her horse. Jack, well he is much like Gabe, moving too fast to read but cute to watch. Hayden, he is still a boy but would sit on Ashley's lap and listen to her read.

During the school years, friends seem to change with each year depending on who is in each class. However, for Ashley since the second grade there was always one constant friend, her best friend – Koreena. Just like all friendships, they had their ups and downs. Koreena - a friend who was always available, always caring, always listening, always there, no matter what. A friend, who would even go on the Screaming Eagle ride at Oaks Park just for Ashley. Two friends who could not be separated and will be friends forever.

There was a special young man that came into Ashley's life during middle school. They developed a relationship that was inseparable. The bond, care and love they shared was a gift from God. This young man, Aidan, was so kind and sweet. When Mom would be waiting at school to pick up Ashley on a rainy day, he would have his umbrella out and offer to keep Ashley dry. Ashley had the opportunity to see him compete in a swim meet and to sing in a recital. As a family, Mom, Dad, Ashley and Aidan went to see Wicked at Keller Auditorium and they also saw the final playoff

game the Portland LumberJax would ever play at the Rose Garden. He would treat her like a princess by opening the door for Ashley at each event.

This last year one of Ashley's teachers started a special class before school. This class was a Success class. Ashley knew that learning was not just during school, but a life long journey. While Ashley enjoyed her fantasy books, she also read books by Dale Carnegie and even some of Mom's business books. Whew, that had to have been fun.

Dear sweet Ashley – so many lives were touched by your presence during your short time here. Ashley was like no other child. She was shy yet outgoing, full of love but experienced pain, lightning fast at reading but tired of regular sports quickly, determined to accomplish her goals yet patient to ensure the most efficient path. Ashley did not grow up with any siblings but she still learned to share, be patient, have compassion, to listen, and to value the gift she had of undivided attention from both Mom and Dad. Ashley's ideal world would be to read a book while riding her horse.

Ashley loved to sing. She was in choir for many years. However, she seemed to enjoy singing the most when she thought no one was listening. Mom and Dad were blessed to hear her beautiful voice. Even though Ashley was outspoken, she was also very reserved.

She was not only an avid reader. She was a writer of poems and romance. There are so many – maybe one day she will be published.

Ashley's Girl Scout leader, JoAnn shared this about Ashley and We'd like to share it with you.

Ashley was a "Larger than Life" person. She will be missed by all who knew her. Her smiles could light up a room but she could also roll her eyes with the best of them. The world has truly lost one of the "Greats" but God has truly picked one of His brightest flowers and called her Home. God's great fortune is our great misfortune.

Thank you to all that were part of Ashley's life. Each of you have blessed her and each one of us have been blessed by Ashley!