

In Memoriam: Christine Loeber '91

She made a difference

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An avid reader and a writer, Christine Loeber '91 counted among her favorite stories the parable of the boy and the starfish. Taken from a book called "The Star Thrower," it tells the tale of an older man on a beach, watching as a young boy tosses starfish that have



washed ashore back into the ocean to keep them alive. When the older man questions whether the boy thinks he can really make a difference — there are thousands of starfish, after all, and only one of him — he responds by smiling, throwing another starfish into the water, and saying, "I bet it made a difference to that one."

As executive director of The Pathway Home, a California program for veterans with post-traumatic stress disorder, it would have been easy for Christine to become like the older man in the parable, overwhelmed by the facility's many patients and their complicated needs. But ask her mother, Marie, and she was very clearly the young boy, unfailingly committed to making a

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difference, one veteran at a time. When she died on March 9, one of three Pathway administrators killed by an individual who had recently been removed from the program, her family and friends were devastated — but unsurprised that she was at work on what had been her day off, or that she had died alongside those who had been most involved in that veteran's care.

Christine grew up in Easton, Massachusetts, with a younger sister, Michelle, and an expansive circle of friends that grew to include her classmates and Delta Zeta sorority sisters at UNH. “Christine was one of those people everyone wanted to be around,” says Kimberly Chenard '92, who lived with Christine in an off-campus apartment after both women transferred to UNH from other colleges. “She had such a natural ability to pull people together. She was incredibly fun and positive and made everyone who knew her feel like they were her best friend.”

After graduating in 1991 with a degree in communications, Christine took a job with the New England Sports Network (NESN), but soon realized that helping others — and veterans in particular — was her calling. She spent five years working for Boston Health Care for the Homeless (BHCHP) and in 2004 enrolled at the Boston College School of Social Work. Her father, Donald, recalls that when she left NESN, he told her it was a mistake; NESN was going to be a big company. “She told me, ‘Dad, I want to help people,’” Donald says.

After earning her MSW, Christine began working with veterans at the VA in Brockton, Massachusetts, focusing on trauma and substance abuse among female veterans. It was there that the running, hiking and cycling enthusiast earned her yoga-teaching credentials and began incorporating yoga as a tool for coping with trauma into her counseling work. She moved to California in 2013 to work at the VA in Palo Alto and in 2016 was recruited to join The Pathway Home. A residential program for service members

deployed after 9/11, Pathway provides counseling as well as education and job training for veterans struggling with the transition back to the civilian world.

Sandra Woodford, an Army veteran who occasionally worked with Christine at a crafts center across the street from Pathway, remembers her as, “delightful, intelligent, outgoing, charming and very dedicated to the veterans — sentiments echoed by those who knew her at BHCHP, Boston College, and elsewhere. “She was really a wonderful critical thinker,” says BHCHP CEO Barry Bock. “You were really struck by what a good human being she was.”

The extensive media coverage that followed Christine’s death and that of her colleagues Jennifer Gray Golick and Jennifer Gonzales Shushereba emphasized that she died doing what she loved. Her mother takes comfort in remembering the joy Christine experienced in all dimensions of her life — not just her work. “She loved to laugh,” Marie says. “She loved music, movies and poetry. She was incredibly kind.”

For a memorial service held in Easton shortly after her death, Christine’s family included her favorite quote, by the 13th century Persian poet and mystic Rumi, on the back of the program. Written in Christine’s handwriting, the passage reads, “Let yourself be silently drawn by the strange pull of what you really love. It will not lead you astray.”

WRITTEN [Kristin Waterfield Duisberg](#) | Communications and
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