Beloved senior dies in tragic accident

Politically active student was grassroots intern, aspired to practice law

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“She was going to save the world. As silly as that may sound, that was her ambition and her career goal,” said Allan Becker regarding his daughter Brianna.

Brianna Nichole Becker, born Dec. 27, 1987 in Houston, was killed while jogging Friday afternoon when she was struck by a brown Nissan Pathfinder exiting a parking lot near the intersection of 15th and Lavaca streets.

Emergency crews responded by 5:36 p.m. and transported Becker to Brackenridge Hospital, where she was pronounced dead. The identity of the vehicle’s driver has not yet been released.

Becker was a government and philosophy senior at UT who was pursuing a career in law. She was highly active in conservative politics and issues and attained key positions in several groups, including Young Conservatives of Texas.

“She was the first person I met at UT and one of my best friends,” said Karen Wood, Becker’s roommate for three years. “Brianna was full of love. She supported everyone in everything they did. She wanted the best for everyone, too.”

Becker attended Our Savior Lutheran School and Lutheran High North in Houston, where she graduated as salutatorian in 2006. She was expected to graduate from UT in May 2010 and aspired to attend UT Law School. She was preparing to take the LSAT on Saturday with her friend Elizabeth Young, a 2008 UT government and history alum.

Young said Becker was the first friend she made after transferring to UT.

“She went out of her way [when I met her] to make me feel welcome and comfortable,” Young said. “She always did that with everyone.”

Becker was a grassroots campaign intern for the Friends of Susan Combs Committee. She was also appointed vice chairman of chapter development in Young Conservatives of Texas and was awarded the Chairman’s Award at the group’s 29th Annual State Convention. Her internship at the Clare Boothe Luce Policy Institute sent her to Washington, D.C., where her Christian conservative ideals resonated on the footsteps of the capitol.

“Her happiness and her smile made me appreciate the little things in life,” said Laura Morales, senior vice chairwoman in YCT. “If ever I was feeling down, I could think of her and how happy she was.”

David Guenthner, Becker’s director at her yearlong internship at the Texas Public Policy Foundation in 2008, remembers her strength, positive work ethic and philosophical grounding. He said he entrusted Becker with writing scripts for a daily radio commentary by the foundation, due to her quality writing and character. “I was able to introduce her to [journalist] John Stossel as the best intern I ever had,” Guenthner said. “One of the few points of solace I can take right now is that I was able to tell her that.”

Becker is of Wendish heritage, a descendent of Lutheran ancestors that first came to Texas in the mid 1850s. She attended University Lutheran Church as well as St. Paul Lutheran Church. Her boyfriend, Tony McDonald, met her in Young Conservatives of Texas when he was chairman of the group in the fall of 2006. He said she regarded herself as an activist.
“She understood that the world needs more people with strong principles and strong faith, and that those people need to put their beliefs into action,” McDonald said. “She believed in truth and did everything she could to promote that.”

UT government professor Alan Sager taught Becker for four consecutive semesters. He said she was an A student who selflessly helped others with their coursework.

“She wanted to be true to whom she thought herself to be,” Sager said. “She brought the highest level of integrity to whatever she did. I found her to be wise beyond her years. And she always seemed to love, just love life and people,” Sager said.

He said he recalled a “very moving tribute” when Becker and McDonald put 3,000 American flags on the South Mall on Sept. 11.

Allan Becker said his daughter never backed down from a challenge and that she was extremely courageous. He said he remembers when he and his wife Julie “dropped [their] baby off almost on her own” in Washington, D.C., for her internship, but that she “conquered the D.C. area and the surrounding Virginia.”

“She is a girl that remains true and firm to her Christian beliefs and convictions,” Allan Becker said. “Our daughter left a legacy. Her mommy and daddy are so proud of her.”

Becker is preceded in death by her grandmother Dorothy Thomas. She is survived by her parents Allan and Julie Becker, her grandparents Monroe and Verna Mae Becker and her boyfriend Tony McDonald.

There will be a memorial service Wednesday at 11 a.m. in Houston at Our Savior Lutheran Church. A second memorial service is planned for Saturday Oct. 3 at 11 a.m. at St. Paul Lutheran Church in Austin. The family said memorials for Becker may be made in her memory to the Our Savior Lutheran Scholarship Fund.

Two hours before the accident Friday, Becker updated her Twitter, mentioning her preparation for the LSAT test.

“I never wanted something as much as I want tomorrow to be the real deal,” Becker said via Twitter. “The one and only time I need to take that test.”