

# Pfleger's impact measured in stories from students, professors

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on hiking and camping trips the summer before they enter college.

Early on, Cummins says Pfleger was nervous about the trip, but that changed as soon as she was in West Virginia with her new friends who were going to Elon in the fall, called the Dyno group.

And for the students with her, Pfleger was a large part of why they enjoyed their trip.

"Right away you could tell she was just an awesome person," says freshman Jennifer Mammel, who went on the AIL trip with Pfleger. "She was talking up a storm."

On the trip, the group called her the mother because she always had her act together.

"She was fearless — she took everything head on," Mammel says. "She wasn't even supposed to be in our group, yet we were so privileged to have her and to get that time to get to know her. We were so blessed to have that time with her. We were meant to be in her life, and she was meant to be in ours."

By the time she arrived on campus, she already had a group of friends from her trip, but Pfleger also started to make friends in different organizations. As an Odyssey Scholar, coordinator Lauren Flinn says Pfleger had a large impact even within one month of being in the program.

"Michelle (Pfleger) was an extremely resilient individual and grateful for the opportunity to attend Elon," Flinn says. "When we made group expectations, I clearly remember her saying, 'Let's not take this opportunity for granted. We have been given a gift, so let's use it.'"

In the week leading up to her death, Pfleger had torn her ACL, so she missed her last two Global Experience classes because the classroom was on the second floor of Long psychology building, where there's no elevator.

She had been e-mailing back and forth

with her professor, Tom Arcaro, talking about missing class and possibly holding class somewhere else until she was off crutches.

Because she had missed the last two classes, she had only come to six. But in that time, Arcaro says, she made it clear she really thought deeply about the course material.

"I went back through the Blackboard posts," Arcaro says. "She was one of the more thoughtful students. She was really taking to heart what we learned in class."

Now, on the Blackboard website when students in Arcaro's Global Experience course log on, an "In memory" banner is displayed on the front page. The quote below it is Pfleger's first Blackboard post from the class, talking about the definition of culture.

"She was very mature and sensitive and was truly embracing the questions that I was throwing at them," Arcaro says of her posts.

But one of the biggest factors that impacts him, he says, is that in more than three decades of teaching higher education, he's never had a student die.

"(There's) almost the literal kind of parental role where you feel a connection to and almost a responsibility for the student," Arcaro says. "So in that sense, it's been more difficult than I would have anticipated."

And though Pfleger was on Elon University's campus for less than a month, more than 100 students, faculty and staff gathered to share stories about her life at a ceremony two days after she died.

The room in Moseley filled with her roommates and professors, as well as people who had only briefly met Pfleger. President Leo Lambert sat on the floor in a corner of the room, dressed down from his typical jacket-and-tie attire. Smith Jackson, vice president and dean of Student Life, addressed the group, saying the gathering was informal and people



During the summer before her freshmen year, Pfleger participated in Adventures in Leadership. PHOTO SUBMITTED

would be able to share feelings and stories about Pfleger.

Her suitemates stood in a line holding on to one another at the gathering of friends service, reading from sheets of paper, laughing and crying through the stories.

When they finished, there were periods of silence until other students stood up to share. Some talked about brief interactions they'd had with Pfleger; others talked about whole trips they'd been on or classes they'd had with her.

"It was very moving," says Arcaro, who spoke at the service. "I guess I was mildly surprised how many people were there — how somebody down from New Jersey, here for one month, touched that many lives."

In her hometown, there was a

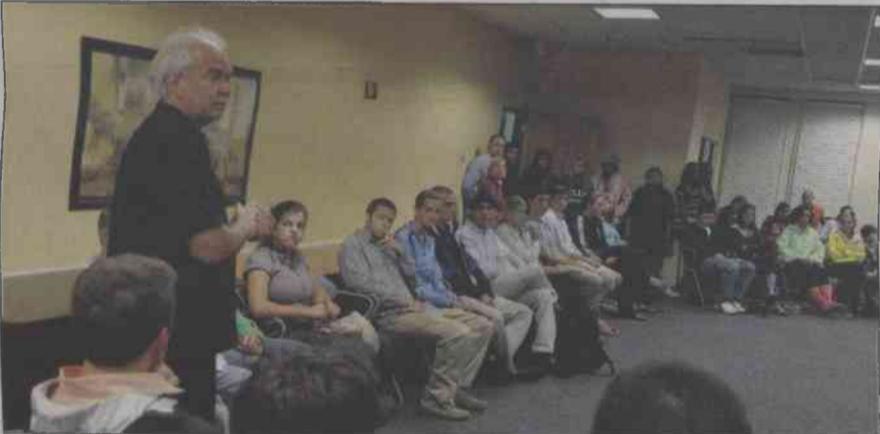
candlelight vigil to remember Pfleger. One of her best friends from home, Colleen Healy, says the service brought out about 500 people in Great Meadows, which is a lot for the small town.

Healy says Pfleger's legacy is being a natural leader who always kept her cool.

"She was the leader. She always has been," Healy says. "She was just a really good friend."

And for Cummins, she says one of the most surreal parts of Pfleger's death is that she won't be coming to Elon this weekend. She hadn't originally planned on coming for parents weekend, which starts one week from Pfleger's death, but had changed her mind at the last minute.

"My plans changed, and I thought I'd go down and surprise her," Cummins says. "But that's not going to happen."



Smith Jackson, vice president and dean of Student Life, addresses students gathered at a memorial service dedicated to Michelle Pfleger, a freshman who died Sept. 24. LINDSAY FENDT | Photo Editor

## Blood clots in lungs lead to student's death

Anna Johnson  
Managing Editor

An Elon University freshman died Sept. 24 from natural causes after collapsing in front of McMichael science Building, according to the North Carolina Medical Examiner Office.

Pulmonary thromboemboli, meaning blood clots in the lungs, were the cause of death for Michelle A. Pfleger, said Bill Fish, an investigator with the medical examiner's office.

Pfleger collapsed while walking to her 9:25 a.m. class, according to an e-mail sent out to the student body on behalf of President Leo Lambert.

She was taken to Alamance Regional Medical Center, where she was pronounced dead.

Pfleger was from Great Meadows, N.J., outside Hackettstown, and lived in Danieley Center G. She was the daughter of Joan Cummins and Jack Rudewicz of Hackettstown. She was also an Odyssey Scholar and recipient of the Mac Mahon Family Scholarship.

Associate Chaplain Phil Smith and Leon Williams, director of the Multicultural Center, are scheduled to work with Pfleger's Elon 101 class, suitemates and her fellow Odyssey Scholars.

A gathering of friends was held at 8

p.m. Sept. 26 in Moseley Center 215.

"The loss of a classmate, friend and student is disconcerting," said Smith Jackson, vice president and dean of Student Life in an e-mail. "It reminds us how precious is the life of each person in our community. Those who knew Michelle may benefit from speaking with a staff member or counselor."

Pfleger's mother welcomes cards, Jackson's e-mail said, and students can send them to her at 30-A Barkers Mill Road, Hackettstown, N.J., 07840. Students were also able to bring them to the gathering Sunday.

- The funeral is scheduled for 11 a.m. Thursday, Sept. 30 at the Cochran Funeral Home in Hackettstown, N.J., with the burial to follow at the Pequest Union Cemetery in Great Meadows, N.J., according to a second e-mail sent out by Jackson.
- The family will receive friends for visitation 4-8 p.m. Sept. 29 at the Cochran Funeral Home.
- Transportation will be provided for students who wish to attend the visitation. A bus or van will leave Moseley Center parking lot 7 a.m. Wednesday, Sept. 29 and will return late the following evening.

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