

The Legacy of Giving:

KIEDC/Mae Ola Riddick Foundation/New Haven Police Department
Food, Hat & Coat, and Toy Drive Volunteer
Dies Suddenly but Leaves Her Children
The Ultimate Gift

Story by: KIEDC



The world lost a giving spirit on Thursday, January 8th, 2015.

Ellen Sakura Elkins, 48, of Meriden, CT passed away on January 8, 2015 at Yale New Haven Hospital of apparent heart failure due to complications of a chronic illness. A gentle beauty of Irish and Japanese heritage, she was even more beautiful on the inside. A wife and mother of four children, she is survived by her husband Darin, her children, Dylan, Emily, and twins, Blake and Tyler, parents Dennis and Saki Elkins, sister, Lori, and nephew Lucas. With a penchant for

sarcasm and humor, she often joked with her husband that the name of her four children spelled “DEBT”. Besides being a great mother, she was a talented chef-caterer-event planner, media marketing professional, and a social media guru.

Born September 8, 1966 in Sagami-Ono, Japan, she was the first child of Dennis and Sakuko Elkins. She attended Valley Regional High School in Deep River and Middlesex Community College in Middletown, CT. At Middlesex Community College, she continuously made the Dean’s List and received the Bates/MacFarland Research Award and was a member of Beta Gamma Xi Honor Society. She was married to Darin John Cessario on July 23, 2001 in Branford, CT. At the time of her death, she resided in Meriden, CT.

She suffered for many years from an unknown international travel illness that caused frequent health issues that eventually led to autoimmune diseases, such as Crohn’s disease and diabetes, and resulted in many setbacks over a period of 15 years. As a dedicated housewife and Mother caring for her four children, she had recently had a surgical procedure that seemed to eliminate the issues she frequently faced and began working with her husband in the technology field doing internet marketing and engineering software solutions. She was a certified HubSpot Inbound marketer and one of the first to develop web sites on their platform. She gamed six hundred levels deep and was a software genius.

Throughout her life, despite the frequent health setbacks, she was always a giver, something of which she was exceptionally proud. She would say that despite what her family was experiencing, there were many people in much worse conditions that could use a little support and assistance - and she would be always the first to provide that support. Her captivating smile and unusual laugh resulted in everyone she came in contact with having an instant attraction to her. Truly, the greatest legacy she leaves behind is one of volunteerism.

Ellen pledged a great deal of her free time to the initiatives of a local Connecticut non-profit called Kingdom International Economic Development Corporation (KIEDC) (www.KIEDC.com). A formidable organizer and computer wiz, she was a talented business owner of a media and marketing companies, Thrivepod.com and Design for New Mankind, with her husband Darin. Using their business expertise, they secured a Google Grant for KIEDC through volunteer efforts. She was a staunch supporter of women and youth in business and was a contributing writer on the topic of social media in a book called “Unleashing the Untapped Reservoir of Entrepreneurship in Women – It’s Your Time”, which is set to be published later in the year 2015.

In the months, weeks and days leading up to the Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays, she worked tirelessly on helping the KIEDC’s CEO, Metashar Dillon, the Mae Ola Riddick Foundation, and the New Haven Police Department with each of the two 2015 Holiday Food, Hat, Coat & Toy Giveaways in New Haven and volunteered at the City of New Haven’s Holiday Toy Giveaway at the Armory.

Ellen and Darin created the marketing banner and brought their entire family to all the events. They worked long hours on those days and offered help in any capacity required. Ellen felt so strongly about imparting the message of always giving to those in need to her children, that she even kept the four of them out of school to volunteer for each day of the holiday giveaway. All the kids helped set up and volunteered at each event, learning the value of giving back to the community.

She kept drilling the message into her young brood over and over throughout the course of the days: I want you to be successful in life, but when you do – you must give back - none of it is any good if you don't give back. While working those days, she would talk to the kids about the kind of adults she wanted them to grow up to be. She wanted them to know that no matter what your circumstances were, there was always someone, more unfortunate than yourself. She wanted them to learn to always be grateful, always be thankful, and focus on giving – because giving of oneself to benefit another is really the ultimate gift.

A memorial service will be held 1 pm on Saturday, January 17th at Ashlar Village, 74 Cheshire Road, Wallingford, CT. Beecher and Bennett Funeral Services of Meriden is handling all arrangements.

A memorial fund has been established to aid the surviving children and donations can be made by clicking on this KIEDC link:

https://www.paypal.com/us/cgi-bin/webscr?cmd=_flow&SESSION=pVyWSWXjdFMdbihltz3yMGIFdPXvozkv8yxnSERu34kCwdUuz8HgdJb29IO&dispatch=5885d80a13c0db1f8e263663d3faee8d66f31424b43e9a70645c907a6cbd8fb4

in care of the Ellen Elkins Memorial Fund using the “Donate” link for PayPal on the website: www.KIEDC.com.

A heart-felt thanks goes out to everyone Ellen touched and a special thanks to the Masonic family of Connecticut for their support and assistance through this trying time. Ellen recently wrote a poem that was discovered by her children after her passing that had a line in it which perfectly fit her outlook and concern for everyone's well being...."Reach out your hand and cling to me".

We will always remember Ellen as one who was vibrant, loving and caring despite any personal issues she was facing, and as one who left her children an indelible example of the power of the love and importance of giving of oneself.

We will always honor and cherish your beautiful example. Your children will always remember the legacy of your “Ultimate Gift”.