



## Andrew Pepper, Jr.

May 24, 1965 - April 13, 2022

Andrew J. Pepper, Jr., formerly of O'Hara, passed away peacefully on Wednesday, April 13, 2022, surrounded by his loving family. He was born on May 24, 1965, to Andrew Joseph Pepper, Sr., and Anna Ruth (Nairn) Pepper. His family and friends called him Andy, Andrew, and Drew, but Andy came up with his own nickname, "Drewster." He took great pride in telling people to call him Drewster. Andrew was charismatic and had an incredible sense of humor. He had an outgoing personality, a sweet smile, and a contagious laugh. He was a natural leader and had many friends. Drew graduated in 1986 from Shaler Area High School. His graduating class was one of the first special education programs implemented in the Shaler Area School District. Andrew loved school and learning and even became proficient in sign language. In addition, Andrew was employed by Achieva and worked in mail service that he really enjoyed. He was a dedicated worker and loved his co-workers and management staff. He retired in the spring of 2016.

Andrew had a natural athletic ability. He started making basketball shots, easily, at six years of age. He loved showing off his moves that he learned by watching Michael Jordan while wearing Jordan's uniform. His love of basketball earned his team a first place trophy at a Carnegie Mellon University tournament. He competed many times in the Special Olympics at Penn State. He also loved bowling with his brother, swimming with his sister, playing Bingo with his mother, and fishing with his relatives. He had a special bond with his father because Drew was also mechanically inclined. They would tease each other while working on home improvement projects. They also enjoyed watching western TV dramas and movies.

Andrew's family was the most important part of his life. He loved to dance to the Sister Sledge song, "We Are Family." He would get so excited for family vacations and reunions. His father, mother, brother, and sister cherished Andy, and he reminded them often that he was "Numero Uno." Andy and his brother, Chris, had a mutual love that only brothers can share. Chris had a deep compassion for him, and always smiled no matter what Andrew would do; it was innate to Chris. Chris's exceptional care of Andy was so valuable to our family. His care allowed Andy to remain at home. Drew had a very special love for his

brother-in-law, John. John really enjoyed bantering with Drew on a daily basis. It was John who first called him Drew. To Andrew, John was like a father, brother, and best friend. Drew's spirit and enthusiasm were always lifted in John's presence. John's dedicated ritual for daily care elevated Drew's quality of life. Andrew's special bond with his sister, Mary Beth, centered around laughter, acting, singing, and dancing. Her intuition allowed her to understand and communicate with him from a young age. She was so proud of Drew, and the love they share is endless. Andrew had a special place in his heart for his grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins. Drew loved being the center of attention and would make a speech at a moment's notice. His humorous one-line statements became popular and were repeated often by family and friends. Andy had a natural ability to imitate his favorite actors, especially Kojak. He was definitely one of the family's entertainers. We would be remiss not to mention his love of cars and clothing. He loved to sit in new cars at a dealership and was always dressed to the nines.

Andrew had a great appreciation for art, music, and nature's beauty. His mother was a significant influence in teaching Andy about the arts. Andy's mother adored him and always made learning a lot of fun. Drew took pleasure in seeing a beautiful sky and blooming spring flowers. He often would say, "That's beautiful!" He loved many music genres including rock 'n' roll, pop, country, and opera. He danced and sang all the time and looked forward to his father's annual party with musicians. One of his favorite songs was "You Light Up My Life" sung by Debby Boone. Andrew was the light in our life and will always be remembered that way. Drew loved truly, cared deeply, and started each day anew. His passion for life and unconditional love for everyone will leave an everlasting impression on every life he touched.

A quote by President Calvin Coolidge best describes Andrew. "Nothing in this world can take the place of persistence. Talent will not; nothing is more common than unsuccessful men with talent. Genius will not; unrewarded genius is almost a proverb. Education will not; the world is full of educated failures. Persistence and determination alone are omnipotent."

No one was more determined and persistent than our brother. Andrew was always a perfect gentleman with impeccable manners. His gentle demeanor, calmness, kindness, and soothing nature comforted those around him. Andy will be sorely missed, but we know that we will be reunited with him again. We will carry his optimism, courage, and love with us always and forever. His bedtime ritual always included the words, "I Love You, Always and Forever." You are one of God's Angels, now, and we know you will be watching over all of us. Godspeed little brother, and may you always hear your favorite Kojak words in Heaven, "Who Loves Ya, Baby?"

Andrew was the beloved brother of Christopher A. Pepper, and Mary Elizabeth(John) Spires; and nephew of Connie(James) Ardolino. He leaves behind many loving cousins. Preceding him in death are his father, Andrew Joseph Pepper, Sr., and his mother, Anna Ruth (Nairn) Pepper; his grandparents, Joseph Pepper and Mary (Rotunda) Pepper; Alphonsus Joseph Nairn and Anna Ruth (Ryan) Nairn. A private Mass of Christian Burial will be celebrated at a later date. Professional Services by Thomas M. Smith Funeral Home & Crematory, LTD., Blawnox. The family respectfully suggests remembrances be made to The Down Syndrome Center of Western Pennsylvania. Mailing address: Down Syndrome Center, UPMC Children's Hospital, 4401 Penn Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA 15224, Attention: Erin Kelly. Make checks payable to: The Down Syndrome Center of Western PA.

Donate online at: <https://www.givetochildrens.org/downsyndromecenter>.

# Tribute Wall

PM

“ I just finished reading the wonder tribute to Andy in the Herald newspaper. I knew Andy well years ago! He was an athlete for the Sharp Connection Special Olympics team and I helped as a coach for years. I attended tournaments with Andy and was also with him and his "crew" at Penn State several times. He was always HAPPY and POSITIVE and it was impossible to be anything else but Happy and positive when you were around him. He was always dancing (loved Penn State Games ---they had a big group dance) and gave many inspirational speeches to his team mates (some were really good!). I attended his birthday party one year --he was an awesome host! All who knew him were blessed with his love for others and joy of life! He is certainly now one of God's favorite angels!

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**Patty McAuliffe** - May 02 at 05:52 PM

SW

“ I was a stranger to Andrew but was well aware of his sweetness and sense of humor -- my MIL (Andy's aunt Laura) would often repeat "Andy stories".

*I met Andrew only once when I was sitting alone on a sofa -- he introduced himself and sat next to me. I became an instant fan and was able to witness for myself his charm and the warmth he extended to others.*

*I can only imagine the joy Andrew brought to those he interacted with regularly. I will cherish this single interaction as Andrew's gift to me -- a gentle reminder of a beautiful spirit.*

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**Sharon Winters** - April 15 at 11:56 PM