

# Young woman lived her life to its fullest

## Ordinary Lives

By Kathy Hanks - The Hutchinson News - [khanks@hutchnews.com](mailto:khanks@hutchnews.com)

MINNEOLA - Brooke Minor gave out a soft whimper the moment of her birth.

"That was the only time she was quiet," said her mother, Laurie Minor. "God gave Brooke an aggressive, magnanimous personality."

The vivacious young woman, who crammed a lot of living into 22 years, died Jan. 16 from complications while fighting a recent diagnosis of cancer.

"She hit the ground running early on," Minor said. "She had those dancing brown eyes and a smile for everybody. She loved everybody."

She also loved sports. And despite only being 5-foot-4, her passion was basketball. She began playing in third grade; she liked to play post, but played point guard, also.

"She was little, but she gave 200 percent with everything she did," her mother said. "She wanted to be in everything - basketball, cheerleader, band, vocal - everything."

After graduating from Minneola High School, Brooke played basketball for the first two years at Sterling College. She continued her dream of earning a degree in sports management and marketing. During her last semester of college, she needed to complete an internship to earn her degree. Through family connections she got an internship in the athletic department of Tulane University.

"It didn't take long for her to prove herself," her mother said.

Known for singing "The Star-Spangled Banner" at Dodge City Days Rodeo, the young woman with chutzpah tried out to sing the national anthem at sporting events while at Tulane.

"Oh, Mom," she would say, sounding frustrated when her mother bragged about her talented daughter. But the 700 residents of Minneola knew that one of their own was doing exciting things in New Orleans.

After graduation, she was hired as an office manager for the NCAA 2012 Men's Final Four.

"She was living her dream working in an office in the Super Dome," Minor said.

While always healthy, Brooke had some bouts of the flu. Nothing serious. She returned to Kansas for a wedding on Nov. 11. While being fitted for her dress, she was in such pain they thought her appendix ruptured.

"This is my daughter's true self: The doctors had her scheduled for surgery because they knew she had a protrusion. She told the doctors she had to be in a wedding the next day," Minor said.

Doctors removed her appendix and a cyst on her ovary and did a biopsy of her liver because they saw lesions.

"That girl checked out of the hospital at 9:30 a.m. and was at the wedding in El Dorado at 4:30 p.m.," Minor said.

They would soon learn she had Stage IV cancer of the liver.

"When the community found out about Brooke, this little 1-A school had a silent auction with baked goods and raised \$4,100, and a friend added \$2,500, for a total of \$6,600 for Brooke," Minor said.

A lot happened in Brooke's life in a short time. In November she became engaged to Travis Highfill, a U.S. Marine she was dating in New Orleans. She played in a Minneola Alumni basketball game against her younger sister who is currently on the girls' basketball team, and she began chemotherapy at M.D. Anderson Cancer Center in Houston.

There were good days and bad, and hope when the pain would temporarily go away. She spent Christmas surrounded by her family and fiancé. Back in Houston the complications continued and Brooke lost her battle. She is survived by her mother, Laurie, dad Kirby, a brother, Bryce, sisters Kara and Morgan, fiancé Travis Highfill and his daughter, Peyton.

"Brooke was one in a million. She lived each day to its fullest and touched so many people," Minor said. "We learned from her to embrace life and live each day to the fullest. She was something else, and we will miss her dearly."