

Family makes trip to Niagara Falls to fulfill item on late daughter's bucket list

By Marisa Religa
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James Neiss/staff photographer The Chesterman family checked off Niagara Falls from their deceased daughter Kristina's bucket list with a visit here this week.

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The family of a young woman who lost her life to a drunken driver last year is visiting Niagara Falls in order to check off another item on their late daughter's bucket list.

Kristina Chesterman of Livermore, Calif., was studying to be a nurse at Chico State University when she was tragically struck while riding her bike home from class.

Sandra and David Chesterman have taken it upon themselves to keep their daughter's spirit alive by fulfilling as many of the goals their daughter hoped to accomplish during her lifetime as possible.

"One of the things Kristina always wanted to do was take a tour of Niagara Falls," explained Sandra during a tour of the Niagara Falls state park on Tuesday. "She had an adventurous spirit and she appreciated natural beauty in a way that not many people do."

During their two-day visit, the Chestermans planned to experience the Falls in a way their daughter would have enjoyed. Their itinerary has included many activities such as taking a ride on the Maid of the Mist, touring through the Cave of the Winds and checking out the Seneca Niagara Casino & Hotel. So far, they believe their daughter would have enjoyed the Maid of the Mist ride the most.

"Kristina would have loved it. I can imagine her laughing at getting soaking wet and not worrying about ruining her makeup or her clothes, enjoying each moment, because for her, it just added to the adventure. That's just who she was," said Sandra.

The Chestermans hope their daughter's story will raise awareness for the devastating effects of drinking and driving as well as the importance of organ donation.

"Another one of Kristina's goals was to save someone's life," explained David. "She decided she wanted to be an organ donor, and that decision has allowed her to save the lives of five people so far," he said.

The family's tour of Niagara Falls was made possible by the collaboration of Delaware North Companies, Niagara Tourism and Convention Corporation, and New York State Parks, who worked together to provide the Chesterman family with the airfare, rental car, and hotel needed for their stay.

"It's a great example of how Western New York opens its heart to people. This young woman, along with many people around the world, dream of one day visiting Niagara Falls. It's important to remember this and appreciate the natural beauty of our city," said state parks spokesperson Angela Berti.

"Kristina would have been up early today to watch the sunrise over the falls," said Sandra. "She truly lived each day like it was her last; taking in every single moment."

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