

## Community remembers Cadence Hartman's kindness as they prepare to say goodbye

By Karrie Carlson Daily Journal Media Sep 7, 2025 Updated Sep 9, 2025

As Jonathan and Angela Hartman share stories about their oldest son, Cadence, the emotions pass in waves. There's joy in his recent high school graduation and the way he was discovering a strength in himself during his first semester of college. They express how proud they are for his many accomplishments, like going to state in Speech, competing at nationals for BPA, becoming an Eagle Scout and his love for music and performing. As they talk about the way a viral video of a slice of bread falling over made Cadence laugh uncontrollably and his recent culinary decision to make instant mashed potatoes using eggnog, their laughter fills the room. Woven in these moments, there is the sad realization that life is forever changed.

On Dec. 5, Jonathan and Angela heard the news that every parent fears; their 18-year-old son, Cadence, was in a car accident while heading to campus for class, and he didn't survive his injuries.

For the communities that embraced him, the sudden and devastating loss has been hard to process. As people reminisce about much he meant in their life, it's easy to see the ripple effect of love his life created.

Laura Quaintance, choir director and music faculty member at MState, explained that although Cadence was only at the college for just under one semester, he made a large impact on everyone who he came in contact with. "From his captivating smile and goofy spirit, to greeting everyone by name as they came into a room or walked by, he was intentional about building relationships and making others feel welcome."

She added that he had an instinctive way of helping those around him. "He was a student we could depend on. He would stop in my office letting me know he had just organized a table of items, or watered our pianos during these colder months. He saw a need and he fulfilled it without being asked."

Whether it was working at Larry's Supermarket in Battle Lake, bringing life to the character Donkey in the Shrek the Musical or attending camp at Inspiration Point, Cadence put his heart into everything he did. He cared for the people around him and wanted them to know they were accepted and appreciated.

Angela illustrated his generous spirit by saying that after his graduation party, Cadence began handwriting thank you notes. "He didn't just write a line. If he didn't know, he would come and ask me who they were, how he knew them and then write a personal note to them." As Jonathan looked at the basket of cards in Cadence's room, a project he was still working on, he added, "We don't know how many he's done or where he left off."

During his semester at MState, Cadence was cast in his first college musical, Zombie Prom. Director Stefanie Gerhardson will always be thankful she had that time to get to know him. "Cadence was always on time, prepared for every rehearsal with lines and music learned. He jumped into the process with both feet helping with the set or doing whatever was needed. He was helpful and kind to everyone and his example was instrumental in helping the cast work through differences and difficult moments," she said. She added that he had a wonderful sense of humor, he was witty and had just a tinge of harmless sarcasm.

When deciding on a service project to become an Eagle Scout, Jonathan said given his passion to help and support others, it wasn't a surprise that Cadence wanted to make concrete benches to install downtown Battle Lake. Now they will be a tribute to honor the pride he felt for his community.

On the wall of his bedroom hangs a framed poster of the United States, marking the impressive number of states he had visited. "He had traveled so much and he had seen so much," Angela said, including the more than one hundred National Parks and Monuments he visited while participating in the Junior Ranger program. "When he'd be in class and a new place would come up, classmates would ask him, 'Have you been there?' and he'd say yes and tell them what he had learned."

The people who knew him best would say that no matter where he visited, Cadence's heart was in the home he shared with his mom, dad and younger brother, Clayton. The love he had for his parents and the special bond he had with Clayton, are perhaps Cadence's most powerful legacy. After visiting college campus and looking at paths to take after high school, he wanted to stay close. The extra months he had to share smiles at the grocery store, make an impact on campus, share love with Clayton and give his parents more time, turned into the greatest act of love he could've shown.

On Dec., 14, the people Cadence loved and inspired during his life will gather at Bethel Church in Fergus Falls for his Celebration of Life. In a message to those planning to attend, Angela said, "Jonathan Hartman and I invite you to join us in a spirit of warmth and joy. We encourage everyone to wear bright colors or comfortable clothing that reflects the happiness he brought into our lives. Please feel free to dress in a way that honors his memory and the joy he shared with all of us. In addition, he loved his Chucks (Converse tennis shoes), if you own a pair please wear them."

As Quaintance reflects and tries to sum up all that he was, she lovingly said, "Cadence loved musicals, so it's fitting to end this with one simple quote from Wicked - Because I knew you, I have been changed for good. I can't think of anyone he knew that wouldn't share the same thoughts."