



Brian Zemba

June 13, 1974 - June 21, 2017

Zemba, Brian, age 43, resident of Huntington Woods, passed away June 21, 2017. Brian was born on June 13, 1974 in Royal Oak to Richard and Jane Zemba. He grew up in Dearborn and gravitated to the many forms of creative expression from an early age. He graduated from Divine Child High School in 1992, studied at the College for Creative Studies, the University of Michigan, and later received his bachelors in fine arts from Wayne State University.

Brian met his wife-to-be, Anne, during his long-time career with Trader Joe's and she instantly became the center of his universe. Together, Brian and Anne shared over 14 years of unparalleled friendship and companionship. Brian was most content simply being with Anne, their beloved rescue dogs, Hotah and Tyson, basking in the camaraderie that stemmed from evening bonfires in their backyard.

Brian had a deep passion and talent for music and art, as well as his own unique brand of humor. He was host to countless bonfire gatherings at his home and a fervent practitioner at Citizen Yoga of Royal Oak. One of Brian's most defining talents was his remarkable ability to make everyone he interacted with feel like the most precious and unique person in his world- some might even dub it the "Brian Zemba" effect.

Amid the heartache of such a sudden loss, Brian's family wanted to share that

his final act of kindness and selflessness was to be a tissue donor and ultimately help others gain a second chance for sight.

Brian was the beloved husband of Anne; loving son of Richard and Jane Zemba; dear brother of Matt (Emma) Zemba and Katie (Dan) Saunders; and adoring uncle to Louis Zemba. Brian's presence will also be greatly missed by his canine companions, Hotah and Tyson.

Memorial gathering Wednesday, June 28, from 1:30-7:00 pm with a formal time for sharing stories and celebrating Brian's life between 5:00-7:00 pm at the Wm. Sullivan & Son Funeral Home, 705 W 11 Mile Road (4 blocks E of Woodward), Royal Oak.

There will be a gathering following the services from 7:00-10:00 pm at Urbanrest, 2615 Wolcott St., Ferndale, MI 48220.

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions in Brian's name may be directed to Divine Child High School, 1001 N Silvery Lane, Dearborn, MI 48128 to establish a scholarship fund for students in creative studies.

Share a memory on the Tribute Wall tab at www.sullivanfuneraldirectors.com

Previous Events

Memorial Gathering

JUN 28. 1:30 PM - 7:00 PM (ET)

Wm. Sullivan and Son Funeral Directors-Royal Oak
705 W. Eleven Mile Road
Royal Oak, MI 48067
(248) 541-7000
royal@sullivanfh.com
<https://www.sullivanfuneraldirectors.com/>


Celebration of Life

JUN 28. 5:00 PM - 7:00 PM (ET)

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Tribute Wall

SG

“ Thank you for continuing to share your many gifts, Brian 



Sandy Grysko - March 08, 2023 at 04:12 AM

MH

“ Was writing about work and working. Thought about some advice Brian gave me. Here's the excerpt:

Best advice I ever received on taking feedback, good or bad, is this: "It's a gift. Someone took the time to think about what you did and respond to it. Like any other gift given to you by someone you don't know well, it might not fit. It might not be your flavor. But it really breaks the relationship if you tell the gifted they did a bad job. Smile, say you like it, try and understand why it was given to you. Ignore it worst, use it at best."

It's not much, but it's a memory. Also, damn good advice.

I'm late to the show here. For a short and happy period of my life, I considered Brian a mentor. Had a lot of laughs with this man. I can't convey how sorry I am this happened. My sincere and profound condolences to all whose lives Brian touched. Don't know if anyone will ever see this. Didn't know after not seeing him in all this time that this would hurt so much. Love and Godspeed Brian.

-Harris

Michael Harris - August 18, 2021 at 10:03 PM

CB

“ Dear Anne

I feel so grateful that I was able to spend time with Brian the week before his passing! It was a gift. I've always enjoyed being with him, his charm, his sense of humor, and his kindness always made me and everyone else feel so special. BUT he was the one that was SO SPECIAL. He loved you so very much. You, Hodat, and Tyson were his loves, his loving family. I admired your marriage. It was so full of comparability and love. Craig, David, and I are so sad for you. No words at this time can truly help you but we want to tell you how much we love you and are here to help you anytime you need it. Let us help you.

Love Gloria

Anne that was written by my mother. You know she isn't tech savvy so she hand wrote it and passed it on to me thru others to post. I'm sorry it took so long for me to post but I'm hoping you still get it. You are always in our thoughts and prayers and we love you very much. Please let us know if there is anything we can do for you.

Craig

Craig Burns - July 16, 2017 at 09:42 AM

“ Anne, Mr. and Mrs. Zemba and the rest of Brian’s family, and all of you friends and co-workers: Please accept my profound condolences. We already miss him dearly.

Brian was the only guy I didn’t mind winking at me, and when he combined his trademark wink with that mischievous, sly grin of his, it made your day.

I worked with Brian for over a decade at our Royal Oak Trader Joe’s. He was always the consummate professional, but also understood that a little laughter and levity goes a long way.

I often marveled at how he could talk to anyone about anything, and was always able to contribute something of value to every discussion. This dude was a humble but serious brainiac.

During what turned out to be our last interaction, we had one of our regular, good-natured teasing sessions, and I called him a “feisty little pugilist” in honor of his old days as a boxer.

He roared with laughter and approval at that.

Brian was, indeed, a fighter to the end. And he was so much more: a creative, talented artist, an irrepressible jokester, a big-time liver of life, a kind and compassionate human being, a good son, brother, uncle, friend and co-worker — and of course, a loving husband completely moonstruck and dedicated to Anne.

When I injured my leg at work, Brian was there, bandaging me up and insisting that I go to the clinic. When my mother passed away around this time last year, Brian was there with words of comfort.

Naturally, when his University of Michigan Wolverines beat my Michigan State Spartans, or when he caught me eating something unhealthy in our break room, he was there as well, with a cagey smile and a smart-aleck remark.

Stu, his eyes moistening and his voice gravelly, said it best in our store the day before we lost him: "He's such a big part of everything here."

Yes, there have been a lot of long faces, tears and hugs at 674 since Brian's all-too-early passing, but I've also noticed something truly remarkable: his co-workers, his friends, coming together even more than usual, helping each other, embracing each other, caring for each other as human beings in this sad time, in tribute to this all-around good guy.

What a beautiful legacy, Brian. From the bottom of our heavy hearts, thank you for enriching our lives.

June 28, 2017

Ron Campbell - June 29, 2017 at 05:37 PM



“ *Jennifer Lindsey Cooper lit a candle in memory of Brian Zemba*



Jennifer Lindsey Cooper - June 29, 2017 at 02:36 PM

RC

“ Brian valued every moment. He was full of conversation for anyone who crossed his path. He had a unique ability to make you think, laugh or feel special, usually all in the same conversation. I'll never forget how kind he always was to my family, each time they came in to shop. I always knew if BZ had been working, because my daughter would have a chocolate bar, or a roll of stickers when they came home. Like many others, BZ was my daughters favorite person to talk to at the store. Brian spent his life making everyone's life around him better. He spread joy and laughter everywhere he went, and will continue to do so, because of all the lives he touched while he was with us.


Ryan Coleman - June 28, 2017 at 11:07 AM


Danielle
Dequin
Lmt

“ BZ and I used to nerd out on yoga. Whenever Todd Tesen came to town, B would be elated at the new yoga pose he can do, or how long he held upward bow. He liked the fun, somewhat acrobatic postures, and would be absolutely lit up about them. Though, I must say, not in the typical "my ego is huge" fashion. He was simply ecstatic at the new level of expansion that he was experiencing. I felt like a little kid again whenever I would see him, as we giddily conspired about what postures were currently challenging us and how we would tackle them. I thought it was interesting, how much BZ likes heart opening postures. He was the poster boy for open heartedness. He genuinely made those around him feel cared for, and attentively knew what made you tick so that he could ask you for updates and watch you light up. I recently read in a book by Joe Simpson "the quality of friendship is not judged on the length of time you have known each other but simply on what you know to be true. Friends do not care how much you know, as long as they know how much you care". I instantly thought of Brian. He is a great reminder of that aspect within us; that open heartedness and excitement and love of life so intense that all else is burned away. Whenever I miss him, I will remember how he was, and try to share that with the world, so that the world is not the lesser, but instead, keeps feeling the blessings of his existence.

Danielle Dequin Lmt - June 27, 2017 at 01:20 PM

CM

“ Dear Anne, I'm so very sorry for your loss. I met your husband when you and I worked together at 665. My heart  breaks for you. I've heard nothing but amazing stories of him. I wish I could have known him more. My deepest sympathy. Love Carol

Carol Mears - June 25, 2017 at 06:07 PM

KD

“ *The first week I got transferred to Ann Arbor, I met Brian. I couldn't figure out who this rock star persona was. He had every one in the store trying to get a piece of his time, attention, or love. That hasn't changed. I was like everyone else, wanting to be in his bright light. We have spent many years together and he has meant so much to me over the last 13 years, just as he has done for everyone that has ever met BZ. Brian Zemba is "The Best"! My love for Brian has and will always extend to Anne and his family and friends. He lives in all of us*

Kwinn Derderian - June 24, 2017 at 07:55 PM

JP

“ *Dear Brian and to all who loved him. By happenstance and via my daughter Allie Paull, and the entire sphere of CCS students and relationship to downtown Detroit, you were a significant participant in our family for a number of years. Your spirit and talent were effusive. I grieve for all who love you and who will miss you tremendously. If only these horrific life events such as what has taken you at this young age could be understood. May your joy somehow sustain others who will suffer your loss.*

Judy Paull - June 24, 2017 at 04:14 PM

AP

“ I stepped onto the elevator to ride all of three floors to my dorm room at CCS, that’s where I met Brian. In a tiny box of a space that could hardly contain his energy and his smile he said hi and when I stepped off the elevator my life had changed. For the next four years, if I were anywhere more than a tiny box of a space away from Brian I would miss him.

He was magic.

Brian would buzz around the room, enchant you with his energy, upend your way of thinking and just when you were too dazzled to wonder what happened, he’d throw his arm around you and disarm you with a smile. He wasn’t satisfied with anything less than an adventure and those years I spent spinning in Brian’s orbit shimmer in my memory like stars. He was my best friend. He was part of my family and I felt that I was a part of his.

It’s been years since Brian and I have spoken but I’ve always held him close and I knew in my heart and through the occasional peek into his life that he was truly happy. My heart aches for Anne and his family. Brian was larger than life but it’s hard to imagine him not here in this one.

And Brian, that time you threw my favorite Vans in two separate dumpsters in Hamtramck so I couldn’t get them back and lectured me on being more open to change... I was mad, even though I was laughing, but you were right and I never forgot what you said. Thank you for everything. Love, Allie (Albert)

Allie Paull - June 24, 2017 at 03:22 PM

SH

“ Brian you were a breathe of fresh air, a smile when there were none and a wonderful friend. Thank you for being such a kind and caring man. You made everything more fun and I am filled with gratitude for the opportunities I had to spend time with you. You made all things TJ's more awesome. Namaste friend.



Sherry - June 24, 2017 at 02:56 PM

Leeba
Marchione

“ I first met Anne and Brian at a Yoga Studio in Royal Oak - maybe 12 years ago. They came to classes often - many that I taught. They both were so genuine and kind in spirit. Years after I left - I would see Brian at TJ and we would talk (sometimes for a good lengthy amount of time ... usually intense conversations about life and love more than simply superficial convos). When I came in to buy items for the Grand Opening of my own Studio in Ferndale in 2013 - he demanded to purchase all the items for me. Any chance to help - to bring a smile to someones face - he was on it.! Brian will always be remembered as one of the great ones. I am so very sorry for his passing. May his memory be a blessing.

Leeba Marchione - June 24, 2017 at 01:29 PM

CG

“ Brian or BZ as my son Jaxon always called him was such a kind and thoughtful person. We were able to get to know him as Trader Joe's frequent shoppers and through Kwinn's softball team. Brian would come to watch and always joked around with my son and made him feel special. My son would always look for BZ when at TJ's so he could say hi to him. When my husband was battling through leukemia and a bone marrow transplant, Brian would always ask me how we were doing and send his positive thoughts our way. When I told Jaxon about what happened, he and I cried together and hugged for quite awhile. I told him that Brian is the type of person that he should look to in his memories of how to treat people and be a positive force in this world. Our thoughts and wishes of love and comfort are with his wife and family. He was truly one of a kind and will be missed.

Carri Griffin - June 24, 2017 at 05:49 AM

JC

“ I'm so sorry for your loss. What a lovely man.

There is No Death

Harry Jackson Van Dyke

I am standing on the seashore. A ship at my side spreads her white sails billowing to the morning breeze and disembarks for the vast blue ocean. She is an object of beauty and strength, and I stand and watch her until at length she is a speck of white cloud just where the sea and sky come to mingle with each other.

Then someone at my side says, "There! She's gone!" Gone where? Gone from my sight, that is all. She is just as large in mast and hull and spar as she was when she left my side, and she is just as able to bear her load of living weight to her destined harbor. Her diminished size is in me, not in her.

And just at the moment when someone at my side says, There! She's gone! there are other eyes watching her coming, and other voices ready to take up the glad shout, "There she comes!" And that, my friends, that is dying.

John Considine - June 23, 2017 at 10:11 PM

MV

“ Over the last two years at Trader Joe's Brian has become a brother to me. I've been through a lot personally this last year and BZ was always there to offer words of wisdom, compassion, concern, a caring ear and so much laughter. We could get each other laughing so hard, over the silliest of situations. He had this way of making everyone feel special, as though they were the most important to him. I've seen him countless times talking to customers as if they were old friends (and some of them were) and was especially great with little kids. He was loved by everyone at our store and by so many others across the state and the country. I was told by another member of the old school team that Brian was a Trader Joe's legend, an original member of the Michigan crew. And that there should be a Brian Zemba in every store. He has touched so many lives and brought so much light to the world, it will never be the same without him. I can't describe the mark he has made on my life. They say that when someone leaves us so early, especially one who made such a difference in so many lives the way Brian did, we need to take a page from his book and figure out how we can each make a bigger impact on our world. How can we spread more love and light into this place we hold and what can we all do as individuals to be more like him? It is what Brian would have wanted us to do to carry on his light, love and laughter. All my love B. Thank you for showing me and the rest of us how. Life will never be the same without you, but we are all better because we got to share your time here with us. Love you buddy.

Mikki Vincent - June 23, 2017 at 09:13 PM

CG

“ Connie Crandall Green lit a candle in memory of Brian Zemba



Connie Crandall Green - June 23, 2017 at 08:59 PM

KB

“ *Brian Zemba was a true gentleman. Everyday from my first day of work at TJ's to the last one we worked together one week ago Thursday, Brian inquired about my wellbeing and more impressively the wellbeing of my children.*

He was genuinely concerned and invested in their lives and success. He knew them individually and held conversations singularly with them on a weekly basis when we would come shopping. I can very happily say that he also knew how very much it meant to me that he was so very kind to my kids.

Brian was the one constant positive male touchstone in their lives.

They looked forward to going into TJ's to chat him up.

After hearing and mourning the news on Wednesday night, we were finally in bed and at about 1:30 am I could hear one of my kids riffling through the basement she went down to get all of the birthday cards he had given to her over the years and her can of corn she received from him. She took them to bed to sleep with her.

What a man!

What an impression!

What a legacy!

To be know as kind and compassionate, what more could one ask for? Forever in our heart. I miss you. My deepest love and appreciation to Brian's lovely wife Anne, and his extended families, by blood, work, or yoga Peace and Love

Kaarina Bienek - June 23, 2017 at 07:49 PM

LP

“ As a frequent shopper at Trader Joe's it was always wonderful seeing Brian. A co-worker of Brian took me aside and told me the sad news. Needless to say, I was devastated. Brian did have the "Zemba" affect on a person and he most certainly did with me as well. When my Aunt passed last year, he said "Liz, pick out something special in the flower section." Other times on my way out of the store he'd ask if I wanted a hot dog if they were grilling in the back or handing me a bunch of tulips to welcome in spring. That was Brian. He had that pragmatic way of letting you know things would work out. As devastated as I was, and I'm only a shopper in the store, I can't imagine the loss that will be felt for Anne, and his close circle of family and friends. Brian, from observation, seemed to just love life. We all need to take a page from Brian's book and live life to the fullest and savor each precious moment as life is precious and can sadly end very swiftly. His spirit will most definitely live on. Brian will certainly be missed. God bless you, Brian. My heartfelt thoughts and prayers go out to Anne and the rest of Brian's family.

*In Deepest Sympathy,
Liz Perinoff*

Liz Perinoff - June 23, 2017 at 07:22 PM



“ *He was always genuine. He was my mentor and friend while we worked together at Trader Joe's. It is big blow to the crew. He would ask about my son and how he was doing. I could never find a time when he said anything bad. I was on his mentor team the bzz bees. Here is a picture of the shirt. Just saying hey Brian in the morning will never be said again. You will be missed by the customer, the crew, and everyone he came in contact with.*



Steve Richmond - June 23, 2017 at 05:04 PM



“ *I'll never forget how he made me laugh and brightened my day at work. - Adam*



Adam Pruchnicki - June 23, 2017 at 03:38 PM



“ *I unfortunately didn't get much time with Brian but we spent many moments bumping into each other on our mats because we both like the same area of the yoga studio! He has a sweet soul! My heart is with you Anne!*

Deb Colburn - June 23, 2017 at 03:15 PM

MI

“ I'll never forget working in the night as a carpenter at TJ..... And Bruno (my dog).... walked in the door..... Z was hesitant at first..... But before the night was over the two of them were walking down the aisles shopping for doggie biscuits together..... Goodbye Z.

Mickey - June 23, 2017 at 01:04 PM