



always fashionably dressed and, unfortunately for Michael, it seems that Etta has inherited her mother's love of shoes. Etta brought everyone so much joy even on the darkest days, and she will always know how much her mommy loved her.

Samantha was diagnosed with Acute Myelogenous Leukemia in July of 2024 when Etta was only three months old. Through nine months of intensive chemotherapy never once did she complain, and she was determined to be a testament to God's glory no matter how unfair of a hand she was dealt. Even during treatments, she made daily note cards of what she was thankful for. When people reached out to check on her, Samantha would ask them how she could pray for them. Sam was so motivated to do whatever it took to get better; she would give anything to be with Etta and Michael, but she fully and entirely trusted God's plan even when she couldn't understand it.

After receiving nine months of excellent care at Mayo Clinic in Rochester, MN, and MD Anderson in Houston, TX, Samantha was able to return to their home in Montana where she had three great days of being surrounded by family, celebrating Etta's first birthday, soaking her feet in the hot tub, watching Etta learn to walk for the first time, spending time in her garden, snuggling her two dogs and two cats, and experiencing the simple pleasures she so enjoyed before she peacefully and painlessly passed away at their home surrounded by people who love her.

Samantha was welcomed into heaven on April 6, 2025, by her grandparents, Dale and Jeannette Heide and Paul

After student teaching in Sidney, she took her first teaching job in Richey, MT, where she taught one year of a kindergarten/first grade combination class and six years of a first and second grade combination class. Even while teaching, Samantha was still a student; in 2019, she earned her master's degree from Rocky Mountain College in Educational Leadership. She had dreams of being a principal, or maybe one day a college professor.

While they were both attending MSU Bozeman, Samantha and Michael Vaira began dating and fell in love. They were engaged in 2020 and wed on July 24, 2021. For the first year of their marriage, they lived in Williston, ND, where Michael worked and Samantha commuted to Alexander, ND where she taught first grade. In 2022 they purchased their home in Sidney, MT. Samantha spent another year commuting from Sidney to Alexander. In 2023 she began teaching first grade at West Side School in Sidney, where she touched the lives of many students and teachers in the eight months before beginning her maternity leave.

Samantha was absolutely adored by her students. She loved all of them, but she had a special way with the "wild ones". She was particularly passionate about reading curriculum and helped cultivate the love of reading within many first graders. Sam was admired by her coworkers; one teacher shared that Samantha "saw potential in every student and every student knew they were valued" and that her students were "guided with clear expectations and gentle encouragement". Another teacher shared that Sam "had a miraculous way of leaving yesterday there--it didn't matter how bad the day before had been, she started each and every morning







with a fresh start". Samantha believed that every child deserves to be celebrated. During her time of illness, she received hundreds of "get well" wishes and art projects in the mail from students and teachers, each of which brought smiles to her face.

Sam was very sentimental and had a special appreciation for anything vintage that told a story. She loved Montana History and going to museums. She refinished furniture, one piece being a dresser from her grandparents' home that dated back to the 1800s. She made many quilts and gave them away as gifts; she designed a very special quilt for her grandmother made from her dresses from the 1950s. Recently she was able to tap into a new creative part of her brain when she and Michael remodeled their house into a beautiful home. She was looking forward to making many meals in that kitchen. Her philosophy was to not procrastinate so you can enjoy the fruits of your labors.

Samantha had many hobbies. Every Christmas there was a puzzle on the card table. She loved a good game of pinochle and Rummikub (and could get quite competitive). She enjoyed playing piano for her own enjoyment. She was an exceptional hobby photographer. Many autumns included hunting excursions and summers were spent at the lake. She enjoyed trips to Deadwood in the Black Hills of South Dakota. She loved to read and study scripture and was part of several Bible study groups where she expanded her faith while enjoying the friendship of other women. She loved rooting for the MSU Bobcats and actively participating on the family ranch, never missing a branding or shipping day.

Sam appreciated many simple pleasures, be it a good cup of coffee (at any hour of the day), cozy sheets and blankets, an especially delicious slice of pizza, listening to gospel music, true crime, or spending time in the great outdoors. She loved sitting on their porch that looked out to the apple trees. She never took any of God's beauty and blessings for granted.

Michael and Sam loved to spend time with one another traveling, whether it be weekend trips close to home snowmobiling in the Big Horn Mountains or spending time at Chico Hot Springs, or longer adventures touring around Greece, Ireland, and Italy. They spent hours working together in their yard and garden, which was a paradise with bountiful veggies and beautiful flowers. They loved camping and hunting together, and later spent hours watching "Murder She Wrote" and "Dateline" in the hospital. The love they have for each other is a true example to others.

Samantha was a beloved aunt. Her nephews and niece will forever remember how she spent quality time with them, how she was always in a cheerful mood, how she truly listened to every one of their stories, brought them back knick-knacks from her and Michael's adventures, and loved each of them. She was so sad to miss the arrival of Baby Paine this fall.

On April 11, 2024, Samantha and Michael proudly welcomed their beautiful daughter, Etta Rose. Even when she got sick and couldn't parent the way she had always hoped, Sam was the very best mother. She loved watching Etta play and seeing her grow and constantly told her "I Love You". Samantha made sure Etta was

