

Making sure everyone has fun: Family remembers Brandan Raley

Clark County boy died along with youth pastor on church youth trip

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Eleven-year-old Brandan Raley wanted everyone to have fun.

Whether it was out in the backyard looking for animals or inside playing Minecraft with his friends, Brandan would connect with those around him.

“He wanted everyone to feel included and everyone to have fun,” Brandan’s father Jim Raley told The Reflector. “He also wanted to make sure everyone else had fun. He wanted to be a part of the equation and be involved with a lot of people.”

Earlier this month, Brandan died while on a youth outing in Hood River.

Raley was on the trip with the Ridgefield Church of the Nazarene, a church one of his friends visited. The youth group decided to visit the well known and local “cool off spot” the Marina Beach sandbar. According to an article written by Amy McCarty for the church, the sandbar gave way during the outing when a youth member stepped out onto what she called “a shelf of sand.”

As more kids began to step off the shelf, it began to give way even more. After deputies responded, they found two people unaccounted for — 44-year-old youth pastor Andrew Inskeep and Brandan Raley.

Raley was found shortly after and was taken to a nearby hospital where he was pronounced dead. Search teams continued to look for Inskeep. His body was found by boaters on Thursday, Aug. 6.

Brandan would have celebrated his 12th birthday on Tuesday, Aug. 11. Family and friends celebrated his life by doing everything Brandan would want to do. Those celebrating visited the local Dutch Bros. Coffee for a birthday drink and ordered Brandan’s favorite pizza, pepperoni with olive. After dinner, the family sat down and played a couple of games. Jim said his Facebook page was flooded with pictures of people eating pizza and playing their favorite games.

“That is what he would’ve wanted to do,” Brandan’s mother Kris Raley said.

Playing games was one of Brandan’s favorite pastimes. Whether it was online playing Minecraft, a popular game where people work together to build houses and survive, with his friends or sitting at the table with his family to play Settlers of Catan, Brandan enjoyed the time together.

“I made an effort to play Mi-



Brandan really loved foxes and even found out that one was living on his property a full two years before his dad, Jim Raley.

necraft with him and his brother and sister every Sunday night,” Jim explained. “It was a neat time and we would do that for hours. It was really fun to experience our kids that way (because) it’s a game that isn’t about clearing levels and defeating bad guys, it’s just about being in an environment together.”

Jim recalled a specific memory of a time he got lost in the expansive Minecraft world and Brandan and his brother came to save him, wherever he was.

“I remember seeing them come over the hill swinging their swords coming to rescue their dad,” he said.

Along with playing games, Brandan enjoyed the outdoors and would spend time on the family’s property looking for wild animals. His favorite animal was a fox, and Jim said Brandan found a fox on the property two full years before he did.

“I gave him a book of animal tracks for the region and he found out about critters in the yard long before we did,” Jim said. “He paid really close attention.”

According to Brandan’s parents, he looked up to David from the Biblical story David and Goliath. Because Brandan was a little short for his age, Kris said he related to David and his ability to be small and mighty but still be strong and courageous because of his faith.

“He had a pure heart, loved with all his heart and gave the most amazing hugs,” Kris said.

The family has already conducted the funeral and memorials celebrating Brandan’s life. However, their church (Woodland

Christian Church) has set up a fund to help offset the costs. Donations can be made directly to the church or online at gofundme.com/f/in-support-of-the-rale-family.



One of Brandan Raley’s favorite foods was ice cream. In honor of his birthday, family and friends celebrated Brandan by eating pizza and playing games.

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