

Sha's mission is fulfilled by family and friends

BY KEVIN HALL

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In ghost stories, spirits are said to linger in this world because of unfinished business. In reality, though, their unfinished business may haunt the loved ones they leave behind.

On June 22, 2011, an automobile crash took the life of Sha Wetherington. The 22-year-old Lenox woman was driving to a job interview when her car ran off Tallokas Road in Brooks County. Events that took place in the days before and shortly after the crash painted a picture of the life Sha envisioned but would not get to live.

The night before the accident, Sha and her mother had a conversation that would set in motion events that would touch many lives, her mother said.

"On that hot summer night I sat on the back porch with Sha as she shared her heart," Jeanine Wetherington recalled. "She had just graduated from Georgia Southern University on May 14 and had not yet landed that first job. She told me she had spent the afternoon at her MaMa's researching some service projects on the internet. She said, 'Mama, I just feel like the reason I did not get the job in Charlotte (N.C.) was because God has a different plan for me. I think I am supposed to go somewhere and help people.'"

The conversation turned toward missionary work in a foreign country, and Sha showed her mother a website she'd researched that day.

"I just want to walk through a village in my Chaco sandals and T-shirt and shorts and experience the culture and do something for the people that live there," her mother recalled



Family and friends of Sha Wetherington who went on a missionary trip in her name in December included, from left, her parents, Duane and Jeanine Wetherington; her sister, Britney Mobley; Judy Phillips, Sha's aunt, Jan Searl; her cousin, Levi Wetherington; her grandmother, Barbara Wetherington; and friends Whitney Hood and Lindsay Jacobs. Photo submitted by Jeanine Wetherington.

Sha saying.

By lunch time the next day, Sha was dead.

"Her MaMa shared how she and Sha had spent the afternoon of June 21 talking about her getting involved in a service project in a poor country," Jeanine Wetherington said. "They talked about God's plan for all of us and about eternity. She spoke of how excited Sha was about the prospect of reaching out to others."

Wetherington said she was taken aback by the numerous stories Sha's friends told, illustrating her daughter's giving spirit and selflessness.

After that, Sha's sister Britney found Sha's "bucket list," saved on her computer. Dated two years earlier, the list included, "Go on a mission trip" and "Become closer to my Lord and Savior."

"We knew we had to continue her purpose in life," her mother said.

The family started SHA Missions — Share Hope Around. Paperwork has been filed to make the project a nonprofit organization, but the process isn't complete yet.

Wetherington said SHA Ministries is built to share the message from 1 John 5:11, "God hath given us eternal life and this life is found in His son Jesus."

"This verse was divinely revealed to us," she said. "A few weeks after Sha's accident, her diploma from Georgia Southern arrived in the mail. Our hearts were crushed as the 'whys' filled every crevice of our souls. The desire to know that our daughter was safe now and to really know where she was made breathing difficult. I

trudged up the stairs to place her diploma, the evidence of a job well done, on her dresser. I pleaded with God to give me assurance that I would see Sha again and she was okay because my faith was wavering.

"Through the tears, my eyes fell upon her Bible. I picked it up and a bookmark caused the Bible to open to Page 1341. There, with an asterisk and brackets was marked, 1 John 5:11-12."

Sha's grandmother, Barbara Wetherington, researched mission organizations, and the family linked up with a group called Praying Pelicans Missions, which arranged to send them to Belize City, Belize, in mid-December.

"On December 15, Sha's daddy, sister, MaMa, aunt, cousin, a family friend, two of Sha's special friends and I set

out on an incredible journey of service and healing,” Jeanine Wetherington said.

Prior to departure, the family collected items to give to those to whom they ministered — especially an item that would have meant a lot to Sha.

“Sha was a gifted soccer player,” her mother said, “so we decided we would take soccer balls and Frisbees to the children. Numerous people who knew about our planned mission asked how they could help. So we asked anyone that wanted to contribute to send us a soccer ball or Frisbee with a Bible verse or inspirational message inscribed on it. We packed 71 soccer balls, 55 Frisbees, bracelets, bouncy balls, hairbows, books, pencils, bookmarks and handmade dolls into bags to take with us.”

Others collected money for the mission, including more than \$500 raised by Sha’s friends at Georgia Southern.

“When we arrived in Belize City, we were met by Pastor Burton, who coordinated the logistics of the trip and Pastor Mark, the leader of Hattieville Baptist Church, which became our home base,” Wetherington said. “The church members fed us and ministered to us over the next week.”

Two 19-year-olds from Alabama who were also going on a mission through Praying Penguins wound up lumped in with the Wetheringtons. By the second day, Jeanine Wetherington said, they were part of the family.

Most of the team’s time was spent at an orphanage.

“Sha had always been a magnet for kids,” her mother said. “They all loved her wherever she went. It was a special gift she possessed.

“Our hearts were touched by the children at the orphanage. They were starved for human interaction. They wanted to touch and talk. So we reciprocated.

“Sha’s daddy said he did not

go to seek out anyone,” Jeanine Wetherington continued. “He was intent on observing and talking with the caregivers in hopes of finding out some items they may be in need of. But on our second

visit, a frail 12-year-old girl gently touched his arm. He turned to see who it was and there

stood Lucy, halfway looking at him in a very timid fashion. She stole his heart and he spent the next several days sitting beside this frail child gently rubbing her arms.

“We tried to talk to each child, to give each child hope of a brighter tomorrow. We played games with them, made witness bracelets with them, distributed soccer balls and Frisbees and fed them.”

Sha’s sister Jennifer and their aunt had made hair bows from the ribbons that decorated

the flowers at Sha’s funeral, and the Wetheringtons gave them to the girls in the orphanage.

“Another site we visited was a home for troubled kids,” Jeanine Wetherington said. “Again, we interacted with these kids, distributed more soccer balls, and Frisbees, and sat and listened to them share their stories and to share hope with them.

“A very poignant moment for me was witnessing Sha’s Aunt Jan rub lotion on some elderly folks we visited,” Wetherington recalled. “The vision of Jesus washing the feet of His disciples rushed to my mind.

“I stood and watched for a few minutes as each of our group was ministering to those precious older people. Kit, one of our newly adopted sons, was witnessing to Clarence about God’s love. Britney, a physical

therapist by trade, was providing physical therapy on an elderly gentleman who had experienced a stroke. So many different ways to provide hope to those with little.”

On Sunday, Dec. 18, the family worshipped with Hattieville Baptist Church.

“None of us had ever experienced such undefiled and unpretentious love for Jesus and mankind,” Wetherington said. “I remarked to Britney, and Sha’s two friends, Lindsay and Whitney, that this must be what Sha experienced each day. It was awesome.”

Remembering Sha’s desire to “walk ... in my Chaco sandals and T-shirt and shorts,” the Wetheringtons had asked that a walk in the jungle be part of the itinerary, and Praying Pelicans made the arrangements.

“I wore her sandals and her daddy, Britney, and I walked with her,” Jeanine Wetherington recalled. “As we started down the beaten path a gorgeous blue morpho butterfly leisurely fluttered just above our heads as it led us. Our guide said that was Sha’s spirit. I like to believe she was right.”

The trip to Belize made the Wetheringtons realize they have much work to do.

“We came to Belize in hopes of completing our daughter’s last spoken dream, to find peace, and to begin our healing,” her mother said. “We achieved those goals, but realized this is just the beginning. There is much work to be done. The other night as her daddy and I were at Sha’s Place on the Hill visiting her, he told her he thought that when he created this special resting place for her physical body, that he had done all he could for her. Now, he realized he was not through.”

The work continues. At the time of this writing — mid-February — Duane and Jeanine Wetherington were back in Belize, helping the orphanage get needed supplies.

“Sha was a gifted soccer player so we decided we would take soccer balls and Frisbees to the children.”

Jeanine Wetherington
Sha’s mother



Sha Wetherington played soccer for the Colquitt County High School Lady Packers. She fights for the ball in a game in March of 2006. Photo by John Mercer.