

In loving celebration of

Alex (Emma) Lee

August 8, 2001–March 8, 2016



Tuesday, March 22, 2016
6:30–8:45 p.m.

The Loft | 150 West 83rd Street | New York, New York

Showcase Tributes

It Takes a Village	Deanna Lee
Remembrance	Vartan Gregorian
Remembrance	Bob Woodruff
Remembrance	Qingzhen Cao
Chinese Poem: A Reading	Thomas & Glenda Li
Remembrance	Fred Carleton
Performance	Davis Jones & Bobby Wooten
Remembrance	Skye Tarshis
Special Message	Pete Wentz
Remembrance	Sophie Silverberg
Remembrance	Winnie Lee
Remembrance	Eliot Bailen
Performance	David, Daniel & Julia Bailen
Remembrance	Jessica Greer Morris
Performance	Girl Be Heard
Remembrance	Anthony Fazio
Performance	Jonathan Brenner

The event will be streamed on Facebook Live at [FB.com/sreenet](https://www.facebook.com/sreenet) (please tune in around 7 p.m. ET).

A Life in Neon: Alex (Emma) Lee

Alex Lee was a budding actor, with stage, Internet, and TV appearances already gracing a growing résumé. Trained initially in classical piano, cello, and acoustic guitar, ^{xe} played drums and a mean bass in a rock band after school. And she was a junior black belt in taekwondo, her small frame belying her strength. Only 14 years old, Alex Emma Lee Caraballo died suddenly on March 8 near his boarding school in Pike, New Hampshire ... leaving behind a doting mother, an extended multicultural family, a beloved pug, and a whole host of friends, fellow artists, and fans.

Born August 8, 2001, in New York City, Alex was known as Emma for many years. By 2015, Emma had become Alex, first identifying as gender fluid, then, as he most recently determined, “my gender identity is male; my gender expression is often female.” (And so, while those Alex touched at varying points in his life have used different pronouns at different times, we’ll use his preferred “he.”)

Alex found his passion across a wide spectrum of the performing and creative arts. As a nine-year-old, he performed at Carnegie Hall’s Weill Recital Hall, then began cello while attending the Ethical Culture Fieldston School. Soon, he realized his cello teacher, Eliot Bailen, could teach him guitar instead ... and he was off to the races. Most recently, he was playing everything from Fall Out Boy covers to (much to his “mum’s” delight) Creedence Clearwater Revival with School of Rock.

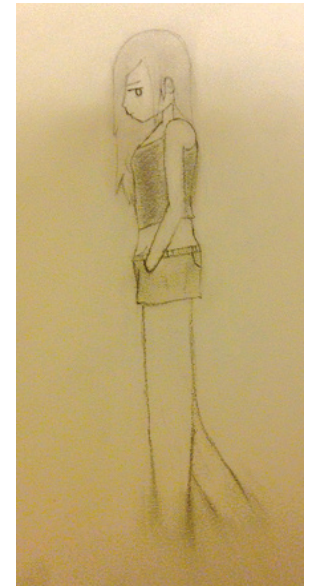
While dreaming of performing on the big stage like Fall Out Boy, he repeatedly stated that his goal was to perform and make “even just ten people happy” with his music. Mission accomplished.

By the age of 12, Alex was an author with thousands of followers for his prolific fanfic writing, which included “a little story about an iron golem human in the Yogscast world of tekkit” on Wattpad. Just this month, he was composing a graphic novel, writing and drawing for hours a day.

This is his sketch for one of the main characters, completed in the early morning hours of March 8, 2016. “But seriously,” Alex wrote both his mum and best friend, Skye, “I’m so proud of this one.”

“I love all types of creative writing,” Alex said. “Songs, stage scripts, and especially film. I’m super-vibrant—think neon colors.”

Alex cared. He found the perfect way to join his desire for social justice—for victims of bullying, for the LGBTQIA community, for misunderstood sufferers of teen depression, for the downtrodden elderly, and others—with the power of artistic expression as part of Girl Be Heard, the New York-based theater company that aims to bring global issues affecting girls to the center stage by allowing young women to tell their stories. “Girl Be Heard is my safe haven,” Alex wrote on the group’s website. “I’ve fallen in love with people I can finally trust, and it’s amazing ... we’re not just an ensemble; we’re a family.”



Alex illustrated his adventurous spirit—literally—with the ever-changing colors and streaks in his short (except when he wore his beloved extensions) dark hair.

In the last six months alone, there were green and blue streaks for an appearance as an extra on *Blue Bloods* ... and bright, fierce red for a Girl Be Heard political theater intensive on girls’ body image in New York’s Union Square.

Late last year, he made his Off Broadway debut, starring in the Midtown International Theatre Festival’s “gender-bending” production of *Cinderella*.

*a gender-neutral pronoun for people who identify as neither solely male nor female



Alex wrote not just essays, songs, poetry, and fiction, but also computer code. He excelled at Minecraft from an early age, and left everyone else in the dust as Link on Super Mario Kart 8.

He was physically gifted beyond the virtual world, taking part in major taekwondo competitions. But Alex was also incredibly gentle, caring for Lucy and Palio,

two dwarf hamsters; Delilah, the ever-squeaking guinea pig; October, the betta fish; and “Jake De Pug,” successor to Winston III. (Alex would exhort everyone to follow APugCalledJake on Instagram.)

“A few things I associate myself with: makeup from the day before, punk covers of pop songs, ripped jeans, and scraped knees after a fall,” wrote Alex.

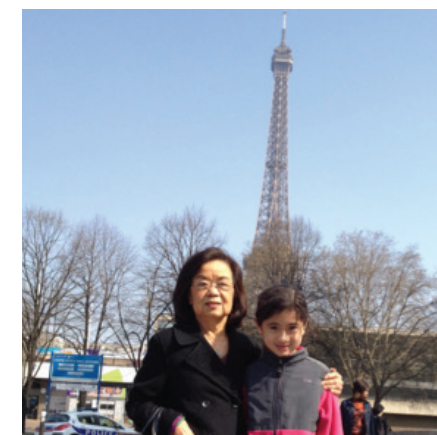
Alex was also proud of his Chinese heritage (fluent in Mandarin, thanks to his devoted Chinese babysitters) and of being part of a family that extended beyond his well-loved grandparents, Ven and Winnie; Uncle Andy and Aunt Donna; cousins Joshua and Alison; and godparents Ken, Glenda, and Anne—to multiple cultural and community circles. At the age of five, Alex accompanied his mum Deanna Lee to Beijing for the 2008 Summer Olympic Games. There he not only met and interacted with local kindergarten students, but took over as Asia Society correspondent for audiences back in America and around the world. Four years later, after Hurricane Sandy devastated parts of the East Coast, Alex and Deanna delivered meals and batteries to homebound elderly Chinese stranded without electricity in New York’s Chinatown. They continued that outreach to elderly shut-ins with regular Sunday morning deliveries throughout the years, for Citymeals on Wheels on New York’s Upper West Side.

“No matter the temperature, they’d pick up the food and make their rounds of multiple apartments in multiple buildings,” said Sree Sreenivasan, a family friend, who sometimes went along to help. “Those recipients welcomed Emma’s smile and energy as much as they welcomed the food delivery.”



Alex and his mother were a team. “Deanna is a single mom who always had her daughter’s back,” said Dana Wolfe, a longtime family friend. “They did a lot together—birthday parties, family gatherings on both coasts and abroad, traveling extensively.” Favorite trips included grandmother’s birthday in Paris, and spring break in Rome two years ago.

Mother and child were regulars at Tarallucci e Vino near their home, picking up peach juice, chocolate chip muffins, pain au chocolat, and cinnamon brioches, said Kate Felsen Di Pietro, whose husband owns the restaurant. She recalls how her son and Alex played together on Deanna’s rooftop overlooking Central Park on hot summer evenings.



“Emma had such expressive eyes,” she said. “I hope Deanna always remembers what it was like when Emma looked at her with love.”

Alex passed away on March 8, 2016, after a long battle with depression. His mum will always treasure the purity and honesty of his poem “Truth,” about the fight to find one’s soul, even through darkness ...

*Because the world
will never see anything
Exactly like it.
Exactly like
You.*

— Alex Lee (August 8, 2001–March 8, 2016)





... what energy and zest! ... What a gift to have had her in your life.

Mira Kamdar

I met Emma when she was 5. She was so rambunctious, creative, unique, special (I could go on forever). We had special ice cream dates when she visited the Asia Society. Losing her is such a loss for the world, but she was the kind of amazing kid who leaves a spark that will continue to ignite so much good for all of us. I bet they have ice cream, taekwondo, and crazy hair coloring where she is now. If not, it's guaranteed she's inventing them.

Jamie Metzl

I too remember our day at South Beach together with great fondness. Emma's sheer delight frolicking in the ocean made it the same for me.

Bob Haberl

We remember Emma so fondly. One of my favorite moments was when Emma wanted to raise money for UNICEF by challenging herself to stay off her phone.... She was so excited about the idea that her own personal actions could affect something and be part of something so global. There were so many times when she fought for her own beliefs and others' beliefs.

She had a smile that brightened the room whenever we saw it.

Sharan Gill

We will always remember Emma crawling through our kitchen, walking in the sunshine by the River Thames with her Mother and Grandmother and those martial arts videos of her contests.

Paolo Marenghi



I wanted to share here ... how much Alex brightened my day each and every time we got to work together.

... in countless ways Alex will live on. One small way is going to be in my teaching; I'm a better teacher and a better man for having known and worked with Alex. He will always have a seat in my classroom.

... know that Alex changed us all for the better.

Horst Rosenberg



Alex was such a light to so many people. I will never forget the first time he came in to audition for us and performed his piece about being gay and confronting his teacher with such conviction and self-awareness that is rarely seen in one so young. And those first few weeks in workshop, Alex constantly wanted to hug everyone, to just give and give love to everyone around him. He very quickly became the beloved little sibling of the group.

I think every one of us felt a close connection to and strong sense of love for Alex, not to mention profound admiration. He has truly impacted us all.

Dena Adriance

I remember so well, dear darling Emma visiting our floor and also meeting her in the lobby as she would wait patiently for you.

Hesh Sarmalkar

... everyone here admired what a beautiful, bright and creative girl she was, truly. And I, for one, loved and think of her incredible, knock-out smile. It feels almost cliché to say those things, they are so obvious about her.

Kathryn Maleeny

I will always remember how she looked when she got excited about something, the big grin on her face, and her fierce hugs. I saw how much she cared about the issues we talked about ... and I saw her have such kindness and empathy.

Elizabeth Brus



I vividly remember being invited to one of Emma's birthday parties on your roof deck.... I showed up by myself with a modest gift of art supplies for Emma. When I arrived, Emma being so precocious jumped up, said hello, took the gift out of my hand and opened it. She was so genuinely excited about the street chalk I had gotten her it totally broke the ice.

... Emma was our most impressive baby sister, who could kick all of our asses—black belt at age 6, fluent Mandarin?!?!

Noopur Agarwal

I have only the fondest of memories of you and Emma. What a bright and shining light she was whenever she came with you to work. I remember her being every bit as adorable, smart and feisty as her wonderful and devoted mom.

Susan Schwartz

I know you don't know me. My name is Bridget Sanchez-Yirka. I served Emma (Alex) and her mother [February 27, 2016] at Tuk Tuk Thai in Hanover, NH. I wanted to say that I am deeply sorry for what happened. My heart goes out to you and the family. She seemed like such a sweet and kind girl. I only remember customers who make some sort of imprint on my heart and I would have remembered her face anywhere.

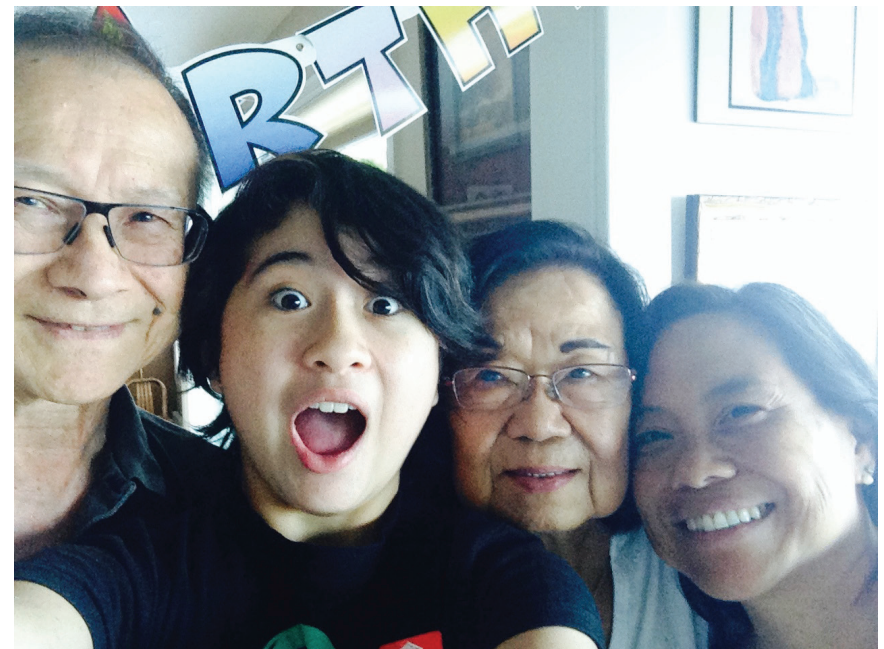
Bridget Sanchez-Yirka

I was Emma's assistant teacher in 3rd grade. I remember her fondly. She was quiet, but kind and smart, and had a truly unique soul.

Shannon Berkowsky

I have so many beautiful memories of Emma ...

Eduardo Guzmán



From the first moment I met Alex, I could see what an amazingly magnetic and vibrant person they were. I loved them instantly.

Jen Thatcher

Emma was a gifted individual and a joy to teach; I feel lucky to have been so deeply touched by her light.

Jonathan Brenner

She was a beautiful girl—I will always remember her bounding into my office to chat—and you have been a wonderful mom.

Dan B. Harris

Neon colors, indeed. Alex (Emma) was loved by many, will be celebrated loudly ... and remembered always with love.

Perry Hewitt

... the vibrant, loving, super human spirit of Alex.

Jessica Greer Morris

More than anything I just remember a sensitive soul—someone who reached out to Ivy and left a lasting, beautiful impression. So grateful I got to meet Alex.

Benjamin Sand

Her presence will always be felt in the world.

Heather Vincent



What a vibrant spirit captured in this photo.

Sara Just

Emma was amazing from the very beginning. Energetic, musical, creative and gorgeous. This picture is certainly her. Always will be.

Bob Woodruff

This photo makes me want to be wild and carefree. What a joyful soul.

Mary McGuire

May all the love & spirit of this magical creature embrace you for all time.

Grace Kahng



I remember the videos you made with her as an adorable young reporter, picnics on the roof, her quiet, studied manner when she was just a little kid, and—most of all—the way you lit up every time you talked about her. Her energy and spirit are unforgettable.

Josh Landis

Alex was such a special person and will live on in the memories of those who knew what a passionate and brilliant individual he was.

Jennifer Gayda

Share Your Stories and Memories of Alex Online

We invite you to share your own stories and memories, as well as photos and videos of Alex, at a special tribute page hosted by LifePosts. You can also learn more about the issues and causes that meant most to Alex, and donate to these organizations in Alex Emma Lee's name.

Simply visit bit.ly/alexemmalee on your mobile device, and login using your Facebook credentials. **Help change our world.**



February 26, 2016

MEMORIALS SPOTLIGHTCELEBRATIONS SPOTLIGHTABOUT USSIGN UPLOG INHelp

BETA

Search

Alex Emma Lee, Memorial OverviewLifeStoryLifeQs

Remembering Alex

This tribute site will be evolving in the coming weeks and months. Please check back frequently to view and add your messages and memories, to learn more about Alex's life and passions, and to find out how you can donate to the causes so important to Alex and help change our world. Join family and friends for an artistic showcase tribute to Alex on Facebook—streaming live on March 22, 2016 starting at 7:15 p.m. at <https://www.facebook.com/sreetet>

Alex Emma Caraballo Lee

MEMORIAL

August 8, 2001 - March 8, 2016

"I'm super vibrant--think neon colors. A few things I associate myself with: makeup from the day before, punk covers of pop songs, ripped jeans, and scraped knees after a fall."

LifeStory

Alex Emma Lee

Alex Lee, beloved child of Deanna Lee, passed away March 8, 2016, survived by family and friends who are immeasurably grateful for the outpouring of ...

VISIT LIFESTORY

LifeQs

SHARE A MEMORY OF ALEX--A

TELL US ABOUT A TIME THAT ALEX

WHAT SONG BEST CAPTURES ALEX'S

Add Your Thoughts

Add your contribution

Post to FacebookPOST

Lauren Zalaznick

I am moved to pay tribute to your daughter, and to you, as a lifelong friend of Steven Waldman, who shared your story. I hope that good thoughts, an outpouring of love and generous support can help you in this extraordinarily trying time. Peace to her--I look forward to making a contribution to one of the incredible charities so thoughtfully listed below.

Mar 16, 2016

Jamie Metz

I met Emma when she was 5. She was so rambunctious, creative, unique, special (I could go on forever). We had special ice cream dates when she visited the Asia Society. Losing her is such a loss for the world, but she was the kind of amazing kid who leaves a spark that will continue to ignite so much good for all of us. I bet they have ice cream, ... [Show More](#)

Mar 15, 2016

RELATED LINKS

How to Make Donations in Alex's Memory

Ali Forney Center

Ali Forney Center's mission is to provide LGBTQ young people housing and a continuum of supportive services to help them thrive and prepare them for independent living. They are committed to saving the lives of LGBTQ youth, assisting nearly 1,400 youth per year through 10 housing sites and a multi-purpose Drop-In Center. AFC has been heralded for their full continuum of care approach to services for LGBTQ homeless youth.

Learn more:

aliforneycenter.donordrive.com/campaign/alexemmalee

Animal Rescue Fund

ARF actively rescues cats and dogs, provides quality care, and offers sanctuary until loving homes can be found. ARF's work with animals is guided by three core values: compassion, integrity, and dedication. They rescue a number of pugs from puppy mills. ARF's next pug rescue will be named Alex in honor of Alex Emma Lee.

Checks can be mailed to: ARF, P.O. Box 901, Wainscott, NY 11975. Please indicate that the gift is In Memory of Alex Emma Lee. Or call Jean at 631.537.0400 x219 with credit card information.

Learn more:

tinyurl.com/animalrescuealex

Citymeals on Wheels

Citymeals is one of the largest meals-on-wheels programs in the U.S., providing 2 million meals to 18,000 elderly New Yorkers each year. In addition to nutritionally balanced senior meals, the devoted staff and volunteers also deliver vital human companionship. As a frequent volunteer, Alex Emma Lee had a wonderful affinity for Citymeals.

Learn more:

citymeals.org/emma_alex

Girl Be Heard

Girl Be Heard is a nonprofit theater company that brings global issues affecting teens center stage by empowering young people to tell their stories. The organization envisions a world in which every person is valued and encouraged to be a leader and change maker. Alex Emma Lee was an active member of this community, participating in their many programs, which inspired and supported Alex throughout the last few years.

Checks can be mailed to: Girl Be Heard, Attn: Alex Emma Lee Fund, 20 Jay Street, Suite 210b, DUMBO, Brooklyn, NY 11201. Or call Jen at 718.222.4475 with credit card information.

Learn more:

girlbeheard.org

Tyler Clementi Foundation

The Tyler Clementi Foundation is focused on creating a new story of inclusion, dignity, and acceptance for youth and their families. The Tyler Clementi Foundation was born out of the urgent need to address vulnerable populations, especially LGBT young people and other victims of hostile social environments. The Tyler Clementi Foundation works to end online and offline bullying in schools, workplaces, and faith communities. Their theory of change is that progress can be made through education, advocacy, and research.

Learn more:

tylerclementi.nationbuilder.com/dev_donate

“I’m super-vibrant—think neon colors. A few things I associate myself with: makeup from the day before, punk covers of pop songs, ripped jeans, and scraped knees after a fall.”