

DSU Mourns the Passing of Devon Miller, Who Inspired Peers and Others

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The Delaware State University family is mourning the loss of Devon Miller, a sophomore criminal justice major and Approaching Storm Marching Band member, who collapsed and died unexpectedly Saturday morning (March 19) while at home visiting his family in Philadelphia.



Devon Miller, shown here performing with the Approaching Storm Band at a recent Hornet home basketball game, was a criminal justice major who had aspirations to work for the FBI.

According to the family, Devon died from a severe asthma attack.

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Devon, 20, was an inspiration to campus members who knew him or saw him perform in the band, as he was physically challenged with arms that were not fully developed at birth. He nevertheless performed admirably on the tenor drums for the marching band and did not let his disability hinder him in the pursuit of his academic dreams.

“He did more for the band than the band ever did for him,” said Randolph Johnson, DSU band director. “The students had daily contact with him, and for some of them it might have been the first time they had been in close contact with someone with a disability like that.

“They found out that he was just like everyone else, and that was a part of their education experience,” the band director said. “The disability didn’t matter.”

Evelyn Miller Palmer, his adopted mother, said that DSU was his first and only choice.

“My granddaughter Angela Porter went to DSU and she would come home and tell him about the school. We would go sometimes to homecoming games and other events at DSU, and he would go with us,” Mrs. Palmer said. “He always said he wanted to go to DSU.”

Mr. Johnson described Devon as a “mannerable” young man, but added that “at the same time he was a prankster, which endeared him to his fellow students.”

Crea Johnson, a baritone musician in the band, said Devon’s ability to move beyond his disability both musically and socially was a major influence on anyone who came in contact with him. “His personality outshone the physical challenge he had; he was always smiling,” she said. “Musically, he was an outstanding percussionist.”

Ms. Johnson warmly remembers the day Devon surprised her and others with his culinary skills. “He cooked a dinner of barbeque chicken along with macaroni & cheese at his apartment in the Village for a bunch of us.”

The band director noted that in January he and Timothy Chambers, assistant band director, went to the Honda Battle of the Bands in Atlanta, Ga., to recruit new band members.

“We were setting up our table when Devon unexpectedly showed up in his band uniform,” Mr. Johnson said. “Devon had gone down to see relatives down there, and he decided he would surprise us and help us to recruit down there.”

Mr. Johnson noted that while band rehearsal could be a strenuous activity, Devon never complained. “His legacy is his dedication and untiring effort to be the best band member he could be,” he said.

The viewing and funeral will be held on Friday, April 1 at Enon Tabernacle Baptist Church, 230 Coulter St., Philadelphia. The viewing will take place from 9-11 a.m. and the funeral will begin at 11 a.m. The burial will take place immediately after the funeral at the Shelton Hills Cemetery in Philadelphia.

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