

## **Benjamin Christopher Daugherty**

*December 15, 1998 – August 30, 2025*

The world got a little quieter on August 30, 2025. Benjamin Christopher Daugherty, age 26, passed away unexpectedly in Colorado; far from his Michigan roots and the family who adored him, but in a state he loved surrounded by mountains and filled with new friends and adventures.

The youngest of five children born to Mary and Brian Daugherty, lovingly nicknamed “the caboose” by his mom, Ben was the final and exuberant addition to a close-knit and lively family. He is deeply mourned by his siblings: Lauren (Will) Yanakeff, Austin (Carlie Haddad) Daugherty, Drew (Naomi Damoose) Daugherty, and Sarah (Noah) Baird. His nieces, Nora and Riley Yanakeff, will surely miss Uncle Ben’s tender embrace and his endless energy.

Though his life was heartbreakingly short, Ben lived with a spirit so expansive and joyful that it touched everyone around him. He was known for his kind and sincere heart, and had a rare ability to make others feel seen, valued, and loved. Whether you needed a pep talk or a bear hug, Ben could turn even the worst day into a hilarious story you’d be telling for years.

While studying mechanical engineering at Michigan State University, Ben captained the water polo team to a national championship, leading with charisma, grit, and a deep love for the game. At 6'5" tall, Ben’s wingspan was legendary in the pool, but out of the water, he lived even bigger. Those arms wrapped around everyone he loved. In nearly every photo, Ben is hugging three or four people at once, pulling them all into his arms with warmth and joy.

After MSU, Ben headed west to pursue his passion for building beautiful homes in breathtaking settings. He had an incredible work ethic and used his social superpowers to connect with people and thrive on worksites. Ben led by example in terms of his effort and attitude, lifting up everyone around him to get the job done with a smile on their face. Ben was a true adventurer, happiest skiing, hiking, rock climbing, biking, camping, boating, fishing, golfing, and any other activity you dared him to try. His favorite moments were spent doing any of the above, beer in hand, surrounded by beloved friends and family.

Ben had a gift for staying connected. No matter how far he roamed, he always made time for a call, a visit, or a message. He ended every conversation with an authentic and heartfelt, “I love you.” He loved to make people happy whether it was through sharing his talent and enthusiasm for cooking (and eating), bringing people’s dream homes to reality, or with an unexpected one-liner delivered at just the right time.

Ben leaves behind a family that is brokenhearted – his grandmother, Jane Bommarito, along with many aunts, uncles, and cousins.

He will be deeply missed by his friends in Colorado, especially his girlfriend, Stella Scott; by a community of former classmates from Dexter High School and Michigan State University; and by an extended network of friends and fellow adventurers spread far and wide. Ben also shared a special bond with his “dinner group” friends, who were like family and with whom he celebrated countless meals, milestones, and moments of laughter.

Those who knew Ben find comfort in imagining him sharing his humor and warmth with his grandparents, Joe Bommarito, Ken and Joan Daugherty, and his cousin Ashley, who left this world before him.

If there's one thing Ben would want all to remember, it's that joy is meant to be shared and life is better when you don't take it too seriously. Rest easy Ben, the world is a better place for having had you in it.

The Daugherty family invite friends to join them for an informal open mic night at Conor O'Neill's on Main Street in Ann Arbor on October 10, 2025, from 7PM – 9PM. It will be a time to share fun memories, personal anecdotes, and insights about Ben.

Ben's life will be celebrated on October 11, 2025, at St. Joseph Catholic Church at 6805 Mast Road in Dexter, MI. The Daugherty's will receive family and friends at 10:00AM and a Mass of Christian Burial will follow at 11:00AM. There will be a luncheon in the parish hall after the service.

In lieu of flowers, the family asks people to consider a gift in Ben's memory to support Michigan State University. A commemorative bench adjacent to the University's new natatorium will recognize Ben's love of water polo, and his family hopes his legacy of leadership, friendship, and fierce joy will serve as an inspiration to others both in and out of the pool.

To make a gift in memory of Ben, please follow the instructions online at:

<https://givingto.msu.edu/causes-to-support/crowdpower/benjamin-daugherty>

Your generosity is greatly appreciated.