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**Photo with Eric Smith and the bike he & his brother custom built.**

## **A Mother's Memories after losing her Son**

Lois' memories of her cherished son Eric brings heartfelt joy, laughter, and tears. A year after the loss of her son, Lois is still surrounded by Eric's favorite things. They often bring her comfort. Her family, friends, and community helped her create a memory garden at her home.

Eric was first diagnosed with cancer when he was 2 years old. During his 31 years, his cancer reoccurred 6 times and he battled 3 different types of cancer. At 2 years old, Eric went through 3 years of treatment for Leukemia. Lois remembers all the dates and treatments and the wonderful friends, family, and medical heroes that supported them along the way. "Eric had a wonderful heart and loved people. He wanted to help others going through cancer," said Lois. Eric heard of a young boy whose mother was fighting cancer through the Ribbon of Hope Foundation and he built him a custom bike.

In 1992, a desperately needed bone marrow match (Fred) was located through the National Bone Marrow Center. Eric had an opportunity to meet Fred sometime afterwards and they quickly became friends. In 2015 Eric contacted Fred, who lived in North Carolina at the time and asked for his help to fulfill his life-long goal to meet Dale Earnhardt Jr. Fred made it happen while Eric was attending a NASCAR race.

Over the years, Eric had opportunities to see some of his dreams and wishes come true. When he was 8 years old he was granted a wish through the Make-a-Wish Foundation. His wish was a toy shopping spree at Toys "R" Us. Because his health condition was very vulnerable, the store opened early for him to shop. Eric's family was later contacted by the Dream Foundation about granting Eric a dream. Rather than selecting a dream that only he wanted, Eric chose a dream that he knew his older brother talked about doing. Eric's brother had mentioned several times about visiting the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame in Ohio. Even though Eric's health was deteriorating he still wanted to see his brother enjoy the trip. Eric's last wish was to finish a custom bike that he had been building. With the help of his older brother he was able to finish the bike a few days before his death.

Caring for Eric had been Lois' motivation for 31 years and she greatly misses his kind voice and tender heart. Lois shared, "I chose Kosciusko Home Care & Hospice because they offered more services locally. Our hospice nurse Rebecca and social worker Jeni were so supportive of Eric and our family. The grief support group and calls from Jeni over the past 13 months have helped me with the loss."

Eric is greatly missed by his family and friends, but he is not forgotten. A close friend shared, "Eric was a fighter and a light in this world that could never be dimmed."