



## In Our Community: Live Like Cat Foundation

*Sharing Caitlyn Carman's legacy of love and passion for life*

By Margaret Pennock | Photos courtesy of the Live Like Cat Foundation

Caitlyn Carman was a bubbly, beautiful, vivacious, genuine, and absolutely perfect daughter, sister, and friend. She was the kind of young woman that drew people to her because she was so caring, loving, compassionate, funny, nonjudgmental, objective, supportive, and smart. Tragically on March 8, 2018, Caitlyn's life was cut short when she was killed in a car accident caused by a distracted driver. She was just 19 years old.

Caitlyn never got to finish her degree at the University of South Dakota and start her elementary education teaching career. She never got to coach cheerleading after dedicating 13 years of her life to Dakota Spirit. And, she never had the chance to say 'I Do' and become a mother, or complete any of the other life goals she had so carefully planned out.

For her mother Barb and sister Alex, it was a devastatingly dark time that still continues to leave a hole in their hearts that can't be filled. Barb shares, "I miss her every single second. And nothing replaces her not being here

with me. It breaks my heart that she is not here for her sister, her friends, and everyone who knew her. Caitlyn was special from the day she was born and the world is missing out on her absence. Every student and child are missing out because she isn't their teacher or coach."

Just one year after Caitlyn was taken from them, her family found a way to keep her spirit and her life's purpose alive through the Live Like Cat foundation. "We established the foundation in March of 2019, on what would have been Caitlyn's 21st birthday. I had been constantly contacted by people, so many I didn't know, to tell me stories about Caitlyn or simply to let me know how much she had impacted their life. It had become obvious to me that her life's work was far from over."

Today, the Live Like Cat Foundation has made a meaningful impact on aspiring and new teachers, children, and communities across South Dakota. The foundation's goal is simple; to continue Caitlyn's legacy through the support of organizations committed to children, education, literacy, and teaching.

### Live Like Cat Accomplishments

- \$1,000 Annual USD Caitlyn Carman Education Scholarships: started in 2020
- Classroom Outreach, Book, and Library Giveaways: over 6,000 books donated!
- \$12,300 Awarded in New Teacher Classroom Supply Grants
- Provided Breakfast to over 400 Teachers in 2021
- Annual Dakota Spirit \$500 Scholarship
- Cheer and Dance Awards: Two Tiffany & Co.® Necklaces Awarded Annually (replicas of Caitlyn's favorite necklace)

This March, in honor of Caitlyn's 25<sup>th</sup> birthday, the Foundation is expanding its teacher classroom grants for 25 veteran teachers. Follow Live Like Cat on their website, Facebook, and Instagram for more details.

To learn more about the Live Like Cat Foundation or to join in helping the cause, visit [livelikecat.org](http://livelikecat.org) or email [info@livelikecat.org](mailto:info@livelikecat.org). ■



*When children go home and tell their families about what they learned in the classroom after Live Like Cat visited and that they also want to Live Like Cat, I guess that is Caitlyn still working her loving magic in a different way. That is what keeps me going. When I see people wearing Live Like Cat apparel or car decals on their cars and I don't even know them. That is what keeps me going. Through all of our scholarships, classroom work, cheer, dance awards, and book donations it is Caitlyn living through every bit of that work. That is what keeps me going.*

– Barb Olson, mother of Caitlyn Carman and Founder of the Live Like Cat Foundation

