



## Samantha Jo Hays

February 7, 1979 - April 14, 2009

Sami Jo Hays was always eager to share her enthusiasm for life with others. She approached life as the ultimate adventure and pursued it full throttle, always with a smile on her face. Sami had a big heart and an endless capacity to love, which she shared with not only her family and friends, but with animals of all kind, especially her beloved horses. Sami may have been granted a short time on earth, but she filled every day with energy, life and love. Samantha Jo Miller was born on February 7, 1979, to Dennis “Jerry” Miller and his wife, Linda (Bennett). She was born and raised in the town of Ironton, in southern Ohio, which normally doesn’t get much snow. Except, of course, for the day Sami insisted on coming into the world. There was a blizzard and her father had to quickly put chains on the tires to get to the hospital on time. Sami was the youngest of four Miller children; unfortunately, one of her sisters died as an infant at 2 weeks of age. From a young age, Sami was always an active child with a boatload of energy, her mom used to call her the “whirlwind” as she just blew in and kept on going. She had plenty of leg room to do her whirling since the family had a tobacco farm with lots of land. Sami always helped out on the farm, cutting and drying tobacco leaves. A true country girl, she always found time to have fun with her friends, playing in the hollers around town, and of course, get into her fair share of mischief. She and her friends would lie down in roadways and outline their profiles with spray paint, perhaps hoping it would jolt an unsuspecting driver. Aside from being with friends, Sami loved to fish whenever possible with her Dad. Sami received her education in the area schools, and participated in many after school activities, including basketball. She was a member of the Color Guard and a majorette in the school band, which went on to win the State competition during her senior year. 1997 was a bittersweet year for Sami as she graduated from Symmes Valley High School, but tragically lost her father. Determined to carry on, Sami enrolled in classes in a college in Huntington, West Virginia, where she studied to be a Medical Assistant and Phlebotomist. After completing her courses, Sami moved to Mason County, Michigan to live with her sister and brother-in-law, Cindi and Roger Lehrbass. It wasn’t long before she was putting her education to good use at Memorial Medical Center in Ludington. In July 1999, a wonderful thing happened – Sami met the love of her life, Michael Hays. He was home on leave from the Marines and some of his family suggested he meet Cindi’s sister. Although Sami was

working when he first went to meet her, he was invited back later that evening and the two talked until six in the morning. Michael couldn't help but be mesmerized by Sami's smiling eyes, and the easy way they could talk to each other. He eventually had to return to base in Cherry Point, North Carolina, but the two talked frequently and stayed in close contact. When Sami went out to attend the Marine Corp Ball in November, Michael asked her to be his wife and they were happily married on New Year's Eve 1999, at his grandpa's home overlooking Gun Lake. After a romantic honeymoon at Crystal Mountain in Northern Michigan, Michael returned to base and made housing arrangements for him and his new bride. Sami joined him a month later. Two years later, on November 5, 2002, Sami and Michael became the proud parents of twins, Brody and Abby, who were born prematurely. The twins were healthy enough to come home a few months later, and they were able to settle in as a family. In April 2005, the family of 4 moved back to Fountain, Michigan, and Sami returned to her job at Memorial, taking up where she had left off. She was instrumental in helping to implement the FastER Track system put in place at the hospital. Just this past summer, Sami enrolled in classes at West Shore Community College in Scottville, where she hoped to earn her nursing degree. Along with her family and school work, Sami continued to enjoy her passion for horses. She rode countless miles as often as she could. She enjoyed being outdoors and was always up for adventure. She loved to go fishing with Michael and her twins, and there was never a better time for her to catch up with her sisters and nieces than on a shopping trip. For this spirited young woman, there were no strangers, only friends she had not yet met. Despite the whirlwind of life's busyness, Sami always made her children her first priority. She cherished every moment she shared with them – snuggling over a bedtime story, cuddling on the couch and sharing all the hugs she could give! She didn't like to be a disciplinarian because it simply broke her heart. Her babies' smiles were all it took to melt her heart. Sami had an immense ability to love, and outside of her family, she had a very soft spot for animals, especially horses. She was very young when she started adopting animals and giving them homes. Sami's dream had always been to own a range free horse farm, where she could provide a home for many adopted animals. Just last fall, Sami and Michael moved into a remodeled farm house with acreage and a barn - her dream come true. Michael built stalls on the lower level of the barn, and was working on a tack room for the upper level. It was a glorious day for Sami on March 20th when she brought her horses home and she couldn't have been happier with her life. Now with a home for her cherished horses, she continued to look for more to buy or adopt on the internet. Sami rode the horses every chance she got, and introduced her friends and family to the joy of riding as well. She and Michael were excited to be making plans for a camping trip with the horses this summer. Sadly, Sami was called home to be with her Lord and Savior on Tuesday, April 14, 2009, from injuries sustained while riding her beloved horse, Lakota. While her death was an unexpected tragedy to her family, they take comfort in knowing she was doing what she

most loved to do at the time. Sami's family and friends will always remember her extraordinary presence in their lives. . Everyone who knew her will remember her warm, welcoming smile, her bouncy step and the way she embraced her life and the people in it, each and every day of her life. As a long-time advocate for Gift of Life, Sami was able to fulfill her wish of donating her organs to help others live. Sami was preceded in death by her father, Jerry Miller, and her sister. She will be lovingly remembered by her husband of 10 years, Michael; her twin son and daughter, Brody and Abby; her mother, Linda Miller of Wilmington, Ohio; her brother, Steve (Laura) Miller of Greensboro, NC; her sisters, Cindi (Roger) Lehrbass of Custer, and Jill (Jeff) Roach of Ironton, Ohio; Mike's father and mother Richard and Susan Hays of Fountain, Mike's sister Sheri (J.P.) Howe of Custer, Mike's grandfather Dalton Holt of Fountain, her niece and dear friend Annelise Gauthier of Fountain, and many other wonderful nieces and nephews. A Celebration of Life service will be held for Sami at 2:00 PM on Friday, April 17 at Our Savior Lutheran Church with her pastor, Rev. James Schroeder officiating. Burial will take place at Bachelor Cemetery in Fountain. Friends may meet with her family for a time of visitation on Friday at the church from 10:00 AM until time of services. Those who wish are asked to make memorial contributions for the care of her children. Please visit Sami's personal memory page at [www.stephensfuneralhome.net](http://www.stephensfuneralhome.net) to read her complete Life Story, sign her guest book, or to leave a memory of Sami for her family. "Wherever man has left his footprints in the long ascent from barbarism to civilization, we find the hoofprint of a horse beside it." - John Trotwood Moore