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Memorial Dedication to Stephanie Feldman Aleong

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MEMORIAL DEDICATION TO STEPHANIE FELDMAN ALEONG

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In October 2008, the legal academy lost Stephanie Feldman Aleong to melanoma. Stephanie was 36 years old.

Stephanie was an Assistant Professor at Nova Southeastern University, Shepard Broad Law Center, where she sagely directed the Masters in Health Law Program and taught doctrinal and legal practice courses. Under her leadership, the Masters Program attracted an increasingly impressive group of health care professionals from around the country.

Stephanie arrived at Nova by way of Emory University, where we first met. At Emory she was known as an extraordinary legal writing instructor and contributor to our Trial Techniques Program.

Stephanie's scholarship and advocacy focused on the safety of the domestic prescription drug supply chain. This interest was cultivated during her six year tenure as a Florida state attorney specializing in the prosecution and investigation of racketeering in pharmaceuticals. In that capacity, Stephanie helped dissolve a federal crime ring and undoubtedly helped countless individuals avoid illness and death from counterfeit drugs. Her work is detailed in a novel,¹ and a Hollywood director intended to create a film about her personal and professional story. Stephanie was a frequent consultant for the print and news media on drug safety and occasionally served as a consultant for television dramas addressing drug crimes.

Stephanie was a talented and passionate teacher. She was tirelessly devoted to helping her students succeed in their courses, careers, and more generally in life. Their successes were her successes. A well-written student paper made her beam; a poorly written one encouraged her to work harder.

Stephanie was also a wonderful colleague. She was one of the first people to welcome me to Emory. She was generous with her time and knowledge, worked to connect people with similar interests, and sought to advance the careers of others.

While Stephanie's academic accomplishments are easy to describe, it is much harder to capture her personality. Stephanie was one of my closest friends, and part of the difficulty may be that I am still too close to the loss.

What I am able to articulate is that Stephanie was one of the most generous, thoughtful, and passionate people I have ever known. A good day

1. KATHERINE EBAN, *DANGEROUS DOSES: HOW COUNTERFEITERS ARE CONTAMINATING AMERICA'S DRUG SUPPLY* (2005).

was measured by the happiness of those around her. A room in her house was dedicated to storing gifts for her family and friends—items she had discovered that reminded her of certain people. The impressive number of meticulously wrapped boxes stacked against the wall demonstrated in one more way that she always seemed to be thinking of others. Even while battling her terminal illness, she would ask me about my family, my career, and even whether I was being a “healthy” vegetarian.

She loved animals, and aside from her domestic pets of many years—Bubba (cat, now deceased), Molly (dog), and Monster (dog)—took care of a family of ducks that lived in a nearby lake (Larry, Curly, and Moe). She once saved an entire litter of newborn possums from certain death by erecting a tent over them to help keep them cool until a wildlife rescue arrived.

What made her enthusiasm for life and generous nature especially remarkable was that her own life had been quite difficult. She almost never spoke about these challenges. When Stephanie was a very small child, her mother perished in a car accident in which Stephanie was the only other passenger. Stephanie was a childhood diabetic who went misdiagnosed for many years, which caused her significant illness and distress. Many people did not know Stephanie had skin cancer until it reoccurred five years after her initial operation. Even at that point, she rarely discussed her illness and demonstrated an amazing resilience and optimism about the uncertainty of life that I suspect most could not garner under similar circumstances.

Stephanie symbolizes, in my view, what the legal profession should be about: passion for scholarship and teaching, determination to make an impact and further legal change, and service to one’s institution and other communities. Legal academia is often an atomistic enterprise. We are rewarded not for the lives we touch or the change we catalyze but for the quantity of articles generated in isolation behind closed doors. This is only part of our task. I believe that we all could learn from Stephanie’s example of what it means to be a scholar, a teacher, a colleague, and a friend.