

The Springfield community is mourning the loss of Emma Shafer, a community and social activist who died last week. Emma was a graduate of Lincoln Land Community College where she attended from 2017-2019. She was very involved in activities on campus, such as The Lamp, the Feminist Action Coalition, and Model United Nations, and she is remembered fondly by faculty who worked with her in these organizations and had her in their classes.

Speech Communications Instructor Monique Davis remembers Emma as “a dynamic public speaker when she took my speech class. She was not only engaging, articulate, and passionate every time she spoke, but she was also kind and encouraging to her classmates. She brought light when she walked into the classroom. I am honored to have known this incredible young woman.”

Dr. Chris McDonald, Professor of Political Science, knew and worked with Emma during her time at LLCC and beyond. “Emma was wonderful—she took every one of my classes, was part of Model UN and I wrote references for her transfer to Uni,” he recalls. “She stayed in touch, and when she came back to Springfield to work, she'd stop by. Emma came to talk to and inspire my honors leadership class last fall and we often met for coffee (tea for her - usually some weird concoction!) to talk about her work/plans and the great things she was doing for our city. She was one of the best students I have had the privilege of instructing and, more than that, she was an antidote to so much that is negative and destructive in the world—she cared and she gave me hope. I never failed to leave Emma's presence more optimistic than I had been.”

Philosophy and Journalism Professor Tim McKenzie recalls the role Emma played as an assistant editor for the LLCC student newspaper, The Lamp: “She was always organizing informal events, such as going out to eat, a haunted hayride, a trivia night or several local debates. Emma was always so excited to see everyone and genuinely excited when others had good news. She had the ability to make everyone feel included. One student said she didn't always feel like Lincoln Land was the right fit for her, but The Lamp and Emma made her feel like she had a home here.” He emphasizes that though Emma traveled the country and world after her time at LLCC, she always wanted to return to Springfield. “I wondered if she'd return because she was so talented, but she did because she wanted to use her talent in the place she loved,” he says. He goes on to share that he has talked to several former students who knew and worked with Emma in the past week, and that some of them met for dinner before the candlelight vigil for her Sunday evening to talk and process their grief.

Cara Swafford, Professor of English and Humanities, knew Emma since she was younger through local music and performing arts and as a student at Springfield High School, as a student at LLCC, and beyond. “She was the musician and performer and classmate my kids looked up to, admired, and befriended. She never forgot a friend, and she remained good friends with my eldest child after college and here in Springfield until the end. While at LLCC, Emma took one of my Composition classes. She was full of great ideas and a leader in class discussions. She had an innate ability to draw other students into her orb and work with and help them. She was a dynamic presence wherever she was, a wonderful student and person. I will never forget how she shined.”

Professor of Accounting Katie Tice shares that “During the Spring of 2018, Emma and I were classmates in LLCC's POS 299 - Race & Inequality. From the start, I had the best impression of her: she was smart and passionate, and during a time of political polarization and hate, she made me feel hope for the younger generation. She talked to me about the Appalachia Service Project that she'd be completing

that summer and encouraged me to get involved. There was something contagious about Emma's enthusiasm.”

Emma’s legacy will live on in the Springfield community. Her parents have published an obituary and tribute in the Illinois Times: <https://www.illinoistimes.com/springfield/emma-marie-shafer/Content?oid=17126952>. Her family has set up Emma Shafer Peace and Justice Fund through the Community Foundation for the Land of Lincoln to continue Emma’s important work, which is linked in the article.