Good morning, everyone.

Thank you for being here to honor my brother, Daniel James “Danny” Carter.

I’m Emily, his older sister, and for as long as I can remember, we were each other’s confidants. We compared scraped knees and science projects, shared first heartbreaks and first apartments, celebrated new jobs and nerve-wracking decisions. If I had news—good or bad—Danny was the call I made before anyone else. And most days, he beat me to it.

Danny was born on March 3, 1988, and in 36 years he managed to live the kind of life that spreads out through a community like sunlight—quiet, steady, and warming everything it touched.

We grew up in Cincinnati, and there, Danny learned to run—really run. He was the star of the high school track team, but if you asked him about it, he’d deflect with a grin and a joke about his shoes doing most of the work. That was Danny—witty, a little humble to a fault, generous with praise for everyone else. He was steady under pressure, the kid you wanted anchoring the relay and the adult you wanted answering the phone when something broke—literally or figuratively.

He studied mechanical engineering, which made perfect sense to anyone who knew the way he saw the world. To Danny, problems were puzzles, not verdicts. He loved fixing things because it let him care for people. He became the beloved neighborhood handyman—showing up with a toolbox and that reassuring voice that could make a flooded basement feel like a Tuesday errand. He mentored local teens, too, coaching youth track, turning after-school hours into a place where kids learned to lace up, look up, and keep going. On Saturdays, he organized community repair days—busted toasters, wobbly bikes, leaky faucets,

and somehow, at the end, laughter.

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Our family feels his absence in too many places to name. He’s the beloved son of Michael and Karen Carter, the brother to me and to our brother Lucas, and the uncle whose three nieces believed that Uncle Danny could fix anything, even the Barbie Jeep with the mysterious rattle. He could, of course. And he’d let them “help,” handing them a tiny wrench like it was the most important tool in the world.

Danny’s faith was never loud, never performative. It was quiet but steady, like him—an evening prayer whispered on the porch, a simple grace before meals, occasional retreats that filled his cup. I used to tease him about his “monk walks” at dusk, hands in pockets, listening more than talking. He said those were the moments the noise fell away and the next step made sense.

He had a thousand hobbies that all felt like love in motion: distance running that kept him grounded, hiking on weekends with a thermos of coffee he swore was an art form, restoring vintage bikes until they gleamed, and strumming a guitar in the corner at family gatherings until the room settled into a soft smile. But it’s the night drives I’ll keep tucked closest. After every big life event—graduations, breakups, new jobs, scares we didn’t see coming—we’d roll the windows down, let the cool air pour in, and sing along to old rock playlists like the road itself was carrying us forward. He had a way of making those miles sacred, a little sanctuary with a dashboard glow and the chorus turned up.

What people will miss most is what I miss right now: his voice on tough days—the one that could take panic down a notch and turn problems into plans. He was always the first to show up when help was needed, the first to offer a ride, the first to say, “Let’s make a list.” And when the list felt too long, he’d remind us with that easy smile, “One step at a time—forward is forward.” I can hear it even now. I hope you can, too.

For his track kids, he was a coach who timed laps and also taught them to pace their lives. For his neighbors, he was the kind of man who tightened a hinge and

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asked how you were, then actually listened. For his friends, he was the late-night problem solver and the early-morning moving-day back. For us—Mom, Dad, Lucas, his nieces, and me—he was our anchor and our laughter, our plan B and the big laugh in the room that turned into everyone else's laugh.

If you're wondering how to honor him, I think he gave us the blueprint. Lace up your shoes and go for a run when the day feels heavy. Pick up a guitar and play a song that lets the air in. Stop to fix the small thing that might not be small to someone else. Offer your steadiness. Make a plan. And when you can't see the whole road, take one step. Forward is forward.

I also want to say to the teens he coached, the neighbors he served, and the friends he gathered like family—you were part of his joy. He talked about you. He rooted for you. He measured a good week not in miles run or gadgets repaired, but in people helped. If you ever felt seen by Danny, it's because he truly saw you. He loved that about life—how showing up could change somebody's day.

Grief can feel like standing at mile 25, wind in your face, legs trembling, finish line still out of sight. If Danny were here, he'd hand us water, look us in the eye, and say, "Breathe. You're not alone. We'll get there." His faith tells me he's already found that wide, open finish we can't yet see—a place of peace and mercy, where the music is always just right and the air is the perfect kind of cool. I can picture him on an endless path, light on his feet, turning back just long enough to wave and smile that familiar smile.

Danny was 36 years old when he left this earth. The number will always feel too small for a life that cast such a long, generous shadow. But the measure of a life isn't just days. It's the lives it steadies, the laughter it sets loose, the hope it plants. By that measure, my brother's life is vast.

So today, we will cry, and we will also give thanks. For the boy from Cincinnati who ran fast and loved faster. For the engineer who fixed what was broken and found the beauty in making things whole. For the mentor who taught "one step

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at a time.” For the son, the brother, the uncle, and the friend whose laugh filled rooms and whose kindness quietly rebuilt the world around him.

Thank you, Danny, for every mile, every song, every midnight plan that turned trouble into a path forward.

We’ll keep going—together—one step at a time.

Forward is forward.

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