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Amy Jo Carlson, 48, died June 6, 2020, in Wamego, Kansas, surrounded by her loving family, after a 10-year battle with brain cancer.

Amy Jo was born November 24, 1971, in Manhattan, Kansas, to Nolan and Lorena (Ruda) Carlson.

She attended Wamego schools and continued her education at Kansas State University and Emporia State. Amy Jo participated in a variety of sports, but volleyball was her passion. As setter, she led Wamego High School to its first-ever State Volleyball Championship title in 1989, which earned her and her team a place in the Wamego Red Raider hall of fame. An article published in 1989 stated that at the time she was “the best setter in NCKL history.” She went on to play collegiate volleyball at K-State and Emporia State, where she earned her B.S. in Biology and Secondary Education and a Master’s Degree in Counseling.

Thereafter, she coached at Baker University in Baldwin; Avila University in Kansas City, Missouri, where she was named Conference Coach of the Year; and St. Theresa’s Academy in Kansas City, Missouri, where she also taught biology and human anatomy for 12 years. She was also heavily involved in the Club Volleyball organization, taking several teams to Nationals.

Exploring the world was another of Amy Jo’s passions. Her travel experiences were made up of several countries in Africa, including Tanzania, Rwanda, Kenya, Uganda and Ethiopia; Cuba; and various areas of Ecuador, such as the Galapagos Islands, the Amazon, and Machu Picchu. One of her greatest adventures was climbing Mount Kilimanjaro. While on her excursions, she captured photographs of the natives, the wildlife, and collected regional artwork.

Amy Jo absolutely loved playing board games, and when friends and family gathered, she’d always have a new game to introduce. She could deal a game of blackjack like no other, and made every experience so much fun. She had the best smile and could light up any room. And her ability to tell stories and make people laugh were just a few of her endearing traits.

Amy Jo lived a simple, yet full life. She didn’t collect “stuff,” she collected experiences and memories. Her goal in life was to make a positive difference in the lives of everyone she touched; and that, she did. Amy Jo was as humble as one comes. And it was through the outpouring of love and the stories shared by her friends and former athletes that her family learned the magnitude of how many lives she impacted.

Amy Jo was preceded in death by her grandparents, Tyrus and Lola Carlson, and Frank and Margaret Ruda.

In addition to her parents, Amy Jo is survived by her sister, Kelly Linnemann (Rick), Manhattan, KS; her brother Jason Carlson, Wamego; her sister Aaron Hanson (Timothy), Waukee, IA; nephews Zachary Nehring, Nathaniel Nehring and Carter Hanson; nieces Chelsey McGhee and Payton Hanson; great-nephew Henry McGhee; and a multitude of friends.

The family and her closest friends will gather for a private ceremony. A public Celebration of Life will be held at a later date. Memorial contributions may be made to the Amy Jo Carlson Memorial Volleyball Scholarship Fund and mailed to Kaw Valley State Bank at 1015 Kaw Valley Park Circle, Wamego, Kansas 66547 or they may be sent in care of Campanella-Evans Mortuary. Online condolences may be left at www.campanellafuneral.com