

Heart of a Tiger: The gifts he left behind: Remembering Isaiah Maxi's commitment to service

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By Tisa Mason

HAYS, Kan. - In a world where the hustle and bustle often overshadow gentle acts of kindness, Isaiah Kevin Maxi stood out. Born on August 16, 1994, in Kansas City, Missouri, Isaiah's earthly journey ended at the age of 30 on July 10, 2025, but his legacy continues to resonate in the hearts of those who knew him.

During the holiday season, when families gather around the warmth of love and laughter, we reflect on the indelible mark Isaiah left on his loved ones and his community. From a young age, Isaiah faced challenges, particularly with the loss of his mother, Kim Alexander-Maxi, when he was just six years old. Yet, amidst personal tragedy, he transformed his grief into a powerful drive for service and leadership, becoming a beacon of hope and positivity for others.

A proud graduate of Fort Hays State University (FHSU) in 2017, Isaiah earned degrees in Sociology and Organizational Leadership while actively participating in student activities, athletics, and working at the Tiger Tots Preschool Center, where he was affectionately known as "Mr. Maxi." His infectious energy lit up the room, encouraging children to embrace learning and teamwork.

Friends and family describe Isaiah as warm-hearted and approachable, someone who made everyone feel valued. He was not just a talented athlete on the football field, earning accolades as a leader of the Fort Hays State Tigers, but also a compassionate volunteer dedicated to uplifting others. Seth Kastle, professor of leadership, once said, "He was the epitome of what we educate our students to be – dedicated to serving others and helping those in need."

After graduation, Isaiah continued his mission of service through AmeriCorps, striving to create positive change in the lives of those around him. He embraced every challenge as an opportunity, believing that "everything happens for a reason," and ensuring his legacy was one of compassion, leadership, and community building.

His sudden passing left a profound void in the hearts of those who loved him. To honor his memory and the values he embodied, the FHSU Leadership Program has renamed its student service award to the "Isaiah Maxi Outstanding Leadership and Service Award." This accolade will celebrate and recognize students who exemplify the same spirit of dedication and service that Isaiah so passionately embraced.

"Life isn't just about football," he would often say. "When I leave here, I want people to say, 'Maxi was a good dude.'" Indeed, Isaiah was much more than a good dude; he was a phenomenal human being whose legacy will inspire generations to come.

This December, as we gather with those who matter most, we remember Isaiah's unwavering commitment to lifting others up and the lasting impact of his generous spirit. His legacy lives on through the stories, kindness, and encouragement he shared, inspiring us to embody the

gratitude, courage, and compassion he represented so well. As we reflect on his life and the holiday season, may we honor Isaiah by nurturing meaningful connections, extending kindness, and carrying forward his call to “make a difference” in our own lives and communities.

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