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## Jeffrey Jiang remembered for love of One Direction and a big smile

RUTH SERVEN *Sep 28, 2015*



Photo courtesy of Shaokai Jiang.

Jeffrey Jiang

COLUMBIA — On Saturday mornings, Shaokai Jiang said, his son Jeffrey would sneak out of bed before his parents got up and play music videos on YouTube. He knew a lot of pop singers, but his favorite band was One Direction. He could name all the singers, Jiang said, and bought a book about the band.

“He was crazy about music,” Jiang said.

Jeffrey loved to sing and dance and began taking piano lessons about a year ago. Earlier in the summer, he won first place at the Mid-America Music Association piano competition.

Jeffrey and his mother, Ping Gui, were driving to play at a piano recital and have a picture taken with his competition trophy when they were involved in a car crash on Saturday, Sept. 19, 2015. Gui, 48, died of her injuries. Jeffrey, who had recently turned 9, died two days later, on Monday, Sept. 21, 2015, at University Hospital.

Jeffrey also loved soccer, his father said. The morning before the crash, Jeffrey had scored two goals at a soccer match. He played with cars for hours. He loved Six Flags and Barnes and Noble Booksellers, and every night he read "Big Nate" comic strips and "Magic Treehouse" books to his mother before bed.

Jeffrey was a third-grader at Mill Creek Elementary School. After the crash, the Mill Creek Parent Teachers Association organized a fund to help pay for funeral expenses and to help family members travel from China.

"We are going to miss our friend Jeffrey," wrote two students, Logan and Luke, on a blog organized by Laura Mathes, Jeffrey's teacher. "Jeffrey was a nice friend to everybody. He was the funniest person in the class. Jeffrey always cheered us up. He loved to play soccer and read BIG NATE. He was the best friend ever!"

Jeffrey always wanted to be the center of attention, Jiang said. He loved to sing, dance and tell jokes.

Family members who arrived over the weekend from China recalled Jeffrey's compliments and his huge smile. When the family went on walks, Jiang said, Jeffrey would say hello to all of the neighbors and always had something nice to say to his family members.

"Jeffrey was always complimentary," Jiang said. "When his mom gets home, he would always say, 'Mom looks beautiful,' and if she was wearing a lot of colors, like on her dress, he would say, 'Wow, Mom, you look so colorful.'"

Jiang said his son had many plans for what he wanted to be when he grew up. Perhaps he would be a police officer, or maybe a chef, because he loved to wear the paper hats from Steak 'n Shake.

Jeffrey is survived by his father, Shaokai Jiang, and brother, Brian Jiang, both of Columbia.

A visitation for Jeffrey and his mother will be from 4 to 7 p.m. Wednesday at Parker Funeral Service, 22 N. Tenth St. The memorial service, together with his mother's, will be at 5 p.m. Thursday at

Woodcrest Chapel, 2201 Nifong Blvd.

*Supervising editor is Elizabeth Brixey.*

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