

Vanessa Joy Merket Blatchford

March 21, 1990 ~ November 20, 2025

Vanessa Joy was born in Las Vegas, NV. She was a nineties baby and the youngest of three kids. Growing up, she moved with her family over a dozen times, building a colorful childhood that would shape her into the dynamic person she became. Her name, Joy, describes her presence and the light she brought to the world.

Whether it was her storytelling gradually becoming more outlandish each time she told it – like the time she told her kindergarten class that she killed a buffalo – Joy was always creative. Her creativity showed through her many musical talents. She played the violin, piano, French horn, and played cymbals for a world championship winning drum corps. She also volunteered for Utah Conservation Corps and lived in a tent one summer. Joy's interests often changed, but no matter her current passion, she gave it her all.

Joy earned a bachelor's degree at Utah State University where she experimented with a few majors before landing on a degree in Human Movement Science. In college, she worked at IHOP where she discovered the loves of her life – a decadent brunch and her husband Chris.

Joy and Chris were married at the LDS Temple in Las Vegas, NV in 2013, but she prefers people think they eloped along the strip. Less than a year into marriage, Chris experienced a near-death illness resulting in months in the hospital, and Joy sprung into action supporting him through his recovery. Joy took her breadth of knowledge and passion about healthcare and began working in pediatric grants at the University of Utah. She loved her work and time at the U of U. She built an impressive career over 12 years, becoming the Director of Research where she oversaw all the university grant submissions. She had a strong passion for driving policy changes and was a respected expert in her field.

Together, Joy and Chris built a beautiful life and community in Salt Lake City. She loved anything that made her laugh or brought her outdoors, if it could do both, even better. Joy loved kayaking, river trips with friends, and enjoying Chris's cooking on a camping trip. Joy had a great belly laugh that came out often and she enjoyed comedy shows the way other people enjoy sports. She knew each comic like a favorite professional athlete and was known to send many many reels and TikToks that cracked her up. An entertainer who loved to be the center of attention, she loved making her friends and family laugh. She had dreams of doing standup one day and even wrote and performed her own bit at a local open mic night. Joy's sense of humor extended to her love of shocking people with a good tale, impressive feat or accomplishment. She was a prankster at heart.

Joy had a big personality and an even bigger heart. Those who knew her well knew she was a sensitive soul that teared up while watching movies. She loved every furry little animal she saw, but loved Zeus – her black cat fur baby – most of all. Always thoughtful, she remembered birthdays and special dates. She loved her family, including Chris's family, that she truly saw as her own family. Joy also spent many trips and adventures with a tight-knit

group of friends that meant the world to her.

Her love of people and good food fueled her to support her husband in launching Blatch's Vegan BBQ, while still balancing their professional careers. They built a community of like-minded individuals and often donated to underserved populations and animal shelters. While Chris was the chef, Joy was the heart and she could always be found smiling at the register. Their restaurant won multiple awards and set in motion many friendships.

We lost Joy's light suddenly on Thursday Nov 20th, 2025. Following hospitalization for a medical condition, she had recently returned home to continue her recovery. She passed unexpectedly at home in Salt Lake City and leaves a larger than life hole in our hearts. Joy is survived by her husband, Christopher Blatchford; her brother Noel Merket (Audrey) of Golden, CO; and her sister Danielle Merket of Austin, TX. She was preceded in death by her mother Glenna Joy Cooper Merket and father Michael Merket.

In order to celebrate Joy's life the way she would have wanted, we will have a celebration of life in a few months, details to come.

In lieu of flowers please donate to Blatch's BBQ and keep her dream alive and make the world a less cruel place.

Venmo @blatchs

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