

Pirates minor league outfielder and former Bradenton Marauders stalwart Evan Chambers passed away suddenly in his sleep at the age of 24 last December. His passing is a source of great sadness for everyone whose path he crossed and whose life he touched, and he left behind a legacy of commitment to community and to the game of baseball that many will aspire to.

Chambers signed with the Pirates in 2009 as a third round draft pick out of Hillsborough Community College. His speed and the strength that accompanied his stocky frame made him an intriguing talent to scouts going back to his high school playing days at Lakeland Senior High School, and his patience at the plate was advanced even as an amateur. After the 2011 season *Baseball America* stated Chambers “has one of the highest offensive ceilings in the system.”

He was first assigned to the Marauders in 2011, helping lead the team to the playoffs. He took over as the everyday centerfielder in 2012, delivering a walk-off base hit to sink Charlotte in a classic extra-inning game, then added two more hits and stole a base the next night in the longest game ever at McKechnie Field. He got his long-awaited promotion to Double-A Altoona in June, and homered in his first start with the Curve. A native of nearby Lakeland, Chambers could count on his parents being in the stands regularly offering love and support, and as a leader and outstanding gentleman he earned the respect of fans and teammates.

"Beyond being just a talented ballplayer, Evan was a great teammate and a quiet leader who went about his craft as a professional every day," Pirates General Manager Neal Huntington said. "Off the field, Evan loved making a difference in the community, and often dedicated a lot of his time working with children in the communities in which he played."

Chambers was a regular volunteer for the Foundation for Dreams and Dream Oaks Camp in Bradenton. The time he gave touched the lives of many children who attended the camp for chronically and terminally ill children. Monetary donations made in his name after his death have allowed him to continue to positively impact the program even though he is no longer there to bring smiles to children's faces.

Keon Broxton, Chambers' high school teammate and a current Altoona Curve outfielder, helps ensure Chambers is remembered daily on the diamond as well. Broxton is wearing Chambers' number 53 this season, and draws "E.C." in the dirt before stepping into the batters box for each at-bat

"I'm wearing his number this year just so he's out there with me," Broxton told the *Altoona Mirror* of his number selection this season.

The Bradenton Marauders will honor Chambers' memory on July 10, holding "Evan Chambers Night" at McKechnie Field. The team has commissioned an Evan Chambers t-shirt that will be given away to the first 500 fans, and a silent auction benefitting the Foundation for Dreams will be held.

Evan Chambers passed away far too soon. The legacy he has left will not soon be forgotten.