

IN THE STATE COURT OF ATHENS-CLARKE COUNTY

STATE OF GEORGIA

**JULIE OLSON-BUCHANAN, and  
JULIE OLSON-BUCHANAN  
AND TIMOTHY J. BUCHANAN,  
as surviving parents of Beth Buchanan,  
Plaintiffs,**

versus

Case No.: **ST-24-CV-1123 cea**

**CESAR RAUDALES MACIAS,  
Defendant.**

### **JUDGMENT**

On September 10, 2025, the Court granted the Plaintiffs' Motion for Entry of Default Judgment Against Defendant Cesar Raudales Macias as to his liability in this action. Now, Plaintiffs Julie Olson-Buchanan and Timothy Buchanan seek damages for the wrongful death of their daughter, Beth Buchanan. The Court held a damages hearing on February 17, 2026.<sup>1</sup>

Individuals nationwide traveled to testify, participated in depositions, and wrote letters to help the Court understand who Beth Buchanan was and how much she valued her life. Ms. Buchanan's immediate family—Julie Olson-Buchanan, Tim Buchanan, and Claire Buchanan—along with Beth's partner, Asa Julian, and fellow Ph.D. candidate

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<sup>1</sup> Defendant raised a number of post-hearing objections that the Court has addressed in a separate order.

Katherine Facticeau, all came to the hearing to testify before the Court. Beth's faculty advisor throughout her Ph.D. program, Dr. Kirsten Shockley, provided a deposition. And many of Beth's close family and friends—Dave and Bonnie Olson, Dr. Eden King, Dr. Mikki Hebl, Arianna Valle, Dustin Maddox, Emily Chang, Emily Pofahl, Grace Power, Reverend Susan Olson, Whitney Jin, and Melissa Manion—provided letters to the Court to review.

The Court appreciates everyone who took the time to share their memories of Beth through letters, depositions, and testimony. Each story played a pivotal role in helping paint the picture of who Beth Buchanan was and the extraordinary impact she had on the people around her. Based on the Court's review of all admissible evidence in the record and presented at the February 17 hearing, the Court makes the following findings of fact about Beth Buchanan.

### **Factual Findings**

One theme, in particular, appeared again and again in the stories shared about Beth: she was a light. Nearly every person who spoke about her described the way she brightened the lives of those around her. One person even described her as "golden." It is rare to be described that way—to possess a warmth, brilliance, and kindness that others immediately recognize. Here, the Court finds that Beth Buchanan truly was that kind of extraordinary person.

Beth displayed that light from a very young age. Beth's curiosity and love of learning appeared early in her childhood. She learned to read before her parents even realized it and was advanced to first grade because of it. Her mother, Julie, described Beth approaching her first day of kindergarten with what she called a "goody bag mentality."

Beth believed school was like going to a birthday party where you got to bring a present home. That sense of excitement about learning stayed with her throughout her life.

Beth quickly distinguished herself academically. In fourth grade, she was named an “Academic All Star,” the top fourth-grade student in Fresno County—a metropolitan area of nearly a million people. In sixth grade, she won a top award at her county science fair and qualified for the state competition. Her academic success continued through high school, where she graduated as valedictorian of a class of nearly 3,000 students.

Despite these achievements, Beth remained remarkably humble. Her family shared that she rarely spoke about her grades or accomplishments because she never wanted others to feel lesser by comparison. That humility appears again and again in the stories shared about her.

In addition to excelling academically, Beth deeply engaged in the world around her. In high school, she participated in musical theater, mock trial, choir, and drama club, where she earned Best Actress in a Musical across her entire school district. She earned the Girl Scout Gold Award, the highest honor in the organization. As an undergraduate, she participated in an all-female a cappella group and served as the head of community service for her college.

Her commitment to helping others extended far beyond school. As her youth pastor recalled, Beth spent early Saturday mornings volunteering at her church’s food distribution program. Seeing the need for healthier food options, she took the initiative to create and lead a community garden that would provide fresh fruits and vegetables to families experiencing food insecurity because she wanted everyone to have the opportunity to eat healthy. Eight years later, that garden continues to provide for the community.

After high school, Beth attended Rice University—one of many prestigious institutions that offered her admission, including several Ivy League schools. As her mother stated, Beth chose Rice because it was a “happy place” and “it just clicked.” Beth initially planned to study linguistics but soon discovered a passion for industrial-organizational psychology: the science of improving workplaces and the lives of the people within them.

Beth pursued her Ph.D. in Industrial-Organizational Psychology at the University of Georgia. She was admitted to all eight graduate programs she applied to, something her professors described as incredibly rare. She chose Georgia because of the faculty and her belief that it was the place where she could do the most meaningful work.

Beth excelled in both college and graduate school. She graduated *summa cum laude* and was inducted into Phi Beta Kappa at Rice University. At the University of Georgia, Beth published research in journals with acceptance rates as low as five percent—an extraordinary accomplishment for a student. Yet, even in her academic success, Beth remained focused on using her work to help others. Her research interests centered on work-life balance, particularly the challenges faced by low-income workers and women navigating complex life circumstances.

But Beth’s impact extended far beyond the classroom or the research lab. Friends described her as thoughtful, reliable, and deeply intentional. Professors described her as brilliant, detail-oriented, and compassionate. One professor remembered her warm smile that reflected genuine kindness.

Beth also filled her life with joy through the people around her. Beth and her sister Claire shared a bond that extended beyond a typical sibling relationship. Claire described how living with Beth was “like a constant slumber party and having my best friend live

right next door.” Beth’s partner, Asa, highlighted her “light,” explaining how their shared humor led them to create their own secret language. Her family described her laugh as unforgettable: “She would throw her head back and laugh with her whole heart.” Her father emphasized how Beth expressed joy for the future, and that no one loved life more than Beth.

Beth truly was unforgettable. This sentiment was captured in a performance of “Forget Me Not” by The Civil Wars, when Beth, Claire, and their father, Tim, performed the song for Julie on Mother’s Day during the pandemic. What began as a simple song choice became a lasting memory and reminder that Beth Buchanan will not be forgotten.

In just twenty-three years, Beth accomplished more than many people do in a lifetime. But Beth likely would not have measured her life by accomplishments alone. As one of her professors reflected, Beth would have measured her life by what she gave to others—the students she would have mentored, the communities she would have helped, and the lives she would have improved through her work.

And from everything shared here, it is clear that Beth gave an extraordinary amount in the time she had.

She was rare. She was remarkable. Beth Buchanan truly was “golden.”

### **Standard**

A damages award for wrongful death is “a figure meant to quantify, as best the law can, the full value of the life of the decedent, as shown by the evidence.”<sup>2</sup> “Full value of the life of the decedent, as shown by the evidence” means the full value of the life of the

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<sup>2</sup> *Medical Ctr. of Cent. Ga., Inc. v. Turner*, 322 Ga. 129 (2025) (citations and punctuation omitted).

decedent without deducting for any of the necessary or personal expenses of the decedent had [she] lived.<sup>3</sup> In a wrongful death lawsuit, a plaintiff seeks to recover “damages for the intangible, non-economic value of her life, that value would have to be measured from her perspective at the time of her death.”<sup>4</sup>

### **Discussion**

While many have tried, it is an impossible task to articulate a full picture and account of Beth Buchanan, a person for whom all words and descriptors are inadequate. And, even if a person could adequately describe her, they would be unable to quantify this as an earthly value, since the capability to accurately comprehend her innate worth infinitely exceeds the realm of human understanding.

The Court will not attempt such an insurmountable task of assigning a monetary value to Beth Buchanan, a soul of incalculable value. Here, the Court must utilize the required legal standard listed above to determine a value allowed under Georgia law. This value only applies in this proceeding and will fall short. In making this legal determination, the Court will consider all of the relevant and admissible testimony provided.

During the hearing, one important truth this Court learned about Beth Buchanan is that she loved life. Whether it was through her academics, traveling, service to others or spending time with friends and family, Beth Buchanan made the most of her 23 years alive, and she truly valued her life. Beth was expected to live to 79.5 years old.<sup>5</sup> Based upon

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<sup>3</sup> O.C.G.A. § 51-4-1.

<sup>4</sup> *Bibbs v. Toyota Motor Corporation*, 304 Ga. 68, 70 (2018) (citations and punctuation omitted).

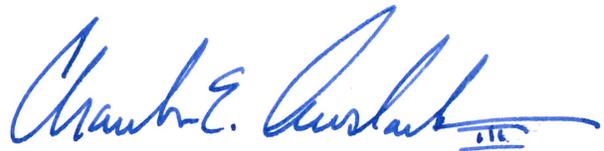
<sup>5</sup> Pl. Ex. 20, Annuity Mortality Table for 1949, Ultimate.

the evidence presented, the Court finds the value of Beth's life exceeds 1 million dollars for each year she would have lived. The Court will award this amount for each of the expected 56 1/2 years she had left to live. Using the guidelines provided by Georgia law, the Court finds the full value of Beth Buchanan's life amounts to \$56,500,000.

### Conclusion

Based on the factual findings above, on Plaintiffs' wrongful death claim, the Court hereby enters judgment in favor of Plaintiffs Julie Olson-Buchanan and Timothy Buchanan and against Defendant Caesar Raudales Macias, in the amount of \$56,500,000 plus court costs. Interest shall accrue at the legal rate of 9.75%.

SO ORDERED, this 25 day of March, 2026.



**Charles E. Auslander, Judge**  
**State Court of Athens-Clarke County**

Copies served by PeachCourt to attorneys and by mail to defendant.

This 25 day of March, 2026.

  
State Court of Athens-Clarke County