Eric J. Goepfert, 37, died on Tuesday, March 13, 2018, after a three-year battle with brain cancer. Eric was born in Houston, Texas on July 15, 1980. From an early age, he was a passionate young man embracing life with a diverse set of talents and engaging personality. Eric had a phenomenal memory and a truly beautiful, creative mind. He loved to engage in dialectic - to teach, to learn, to facilitate relationship building, and to fight for people and things that demanded advocacy. He had perfect pitch and was a gifted pianist; he was an accomplished swimmer and water polo player; he was remarkably imaginative, expressing himself through music, art, carpentry, witty commentary, and food to name a few. Eric forever maximized time with those he cared for because sleep and rest were for another lifetime. He was the linchpin of his family and loved beyond words.

To his friends and family, Eric was a force. His unique and sometimes wild energy was captivating and addictive. His cutting wit combined with a studied eye in human character, made his observations endlessly entertaining and illuminating. Eric made it easy to see the ridiculousness of your life, or life in general, and he made it easy to find humanity in difficult situations. To be able to spend time with him, to be close to him, truly felt like a gift of good luck; for there was always a sense that he could not have enough time in his life for all the people who so desired it. Eric was not a friend who simply existed side by side with you. He charged you with reflecting upon yourself critically in ways that were sometimes complicated or trying, but this was always from a place of love and growth. A true thinker, a pragmatist, an inventor, Eric was broadly adept in the sciences and humanities. His ideas and opinions changed the way we thought about ourselves and our surroundings, yet he remained approachable and self-effacing. Despite his diagnosis, Eric continued researching, writing, teaching and doctoring until the end of his life with such fervor that it left us as witnesses awe-struck and inspired. Eric will continue to permeate and shape many of our lives in ways we cannot know, and in this way, he will continue to exist beside us on this earth.
A number of us will remember the very moment when Eric met his husband Brian in 2009, on a dance floor not far from the hospital where they both worked and noticed each other. They quickly fell in love. Their mutual interest in food, beer, museums, ceramics and travel kept them constantly on the move and thoroughly enriched. They loved organizing trips and dinner parties for their tightknit family of friends. In 2015, they married in Boston and the two seemingly filled all their waking hours with learning, biking, companionship, laughing and collecting. Brian had a truly unwavering ability to help Eric through various surgeries, recoveries and challenges, and it is difficult to comprehend what Eric’s life would have been like without Brian steadily by his side. Eric and Brian shared a love and solidarity that is the envy of many.

Eric graduated from Strake Jesuit College Preparatory in 1998, received his undergraduate degree at University of Texas in Austin in 2002, and graduated from Baylor College of Medicine in 2006. He completed his general psychiatry training at the Harvard Longwood Program in 2010, with one year as chief resident, and then a child and adolescent psychiatry fellowship at Cambridge Health Alliance in 2012. He joined the faculty at Tufts Medical Center as an assistant professor of psychiatry the same year. Eric was committed to being a caring physician and made a lasting impression on those who met him. Naturally curious and quick to master new information, he asked probing questions and thought deeply about the most challenging clinical issues. Supremely likable and with a calm, warm presence, Eric was magnetic in a way that drew the deep regard of patients, teachers, and colleagues. Although highly intelligent, he was disarmingly unpretentious and direct in a way that garnered trust and made others feel respected in return. With the ability to tailor his approach to the patient's needs, he could be playful and light-hearted with a six-year-old, irreverent with a teenager, and calmly professional with anxious parents. Areas of special clinical and research interest included families and children with an autism spectrum diagnosis, children with psychosomatic conditions, developmental disorders, and family therapy and systems. He was a founding faculty member of the Autism Behavior Clinic at Tufts and presented his work nationally through the autumn of 2017, despite the significant challenges that his illness posed. The Tufts Annual Faculty Teaching Award has been renamed the Eric Goepfert, M.D. Faculty Teaching Award in his honor. He will be sorely missed, but his warm laughter, inquisitive mind, infectious energy, and kind words will live on in those he touched.

Eric is preceded in death by his maternal grandparents, Mary Margaret and George Gaenslen, and his paternal grandparents, Maria Hielbig and Juan Pablo Göpfert. He is survived by his husband Brian McDonnell, parents Helmut and Joann Goepfert, siblings Ryan Goepfert (Sarah), Paul Goepfert (Alice), and Susana Willingham (Ray), nephews Reeves and Schuler Goepfert, Jayden and Dakari Puna, nieces Monica Willingham and Kiana Puna, in-laws Bill and Mary McDonnell, and a host of uncles, aunts, cousins, siblings by marriage, and friends. Eric is also survived by his beloved dog Iphy, who was easily among the deepest sources of strength and comfort in the last 10 years. His family and friends are grateful to MD Anderson Cancer Center, TIRR, and Dana Farber Cancer Institute for providing Eric with several wonderful years after a devastating diagnosis. Eric chose to donate his body for brain cancer research. In lieu of flowers, donations can be made per Eric’s wish to the American Family Therapy Academy (AFTA.org). A memorial service will be held at First Parish Dorchester at 10 Parish Street in Dorchester, MA on Saturday, March 17, 2018 at 2pm, as well as a celebration of Eric in Houston.
Robert J. Lawler & Crosby Funeral Home
1803 Centre Street
West Roxbury, MA 02132
617-323-5600
http://www.lawlerfuneralhome.com