

October 23, 2024

With heavy hearts, we are writing to share that we lost our dear friend and visionary leader, Mark Branagh. Mark spent the past several years managing a rare lung condition. He passed away peacefully, sooner than anyone expected, at his home on Sunday, October 13th.

As you know, Mark enjoyed connecting with people (as much as he claimed to be an introvert). He was a natural storyteller and never failed to make people laugh. Mark was always on the lookout for ways to help others and he saw the goodness in everyone he met.

He was a self-proclaimed data geek, and a data engineer by training. Early in his career as a researcher at Stanford University, an opportunity came his way to create a database for the State of California to track teen pregnancies, and the database he created was called LodeStar. This project led to the formation of Branagh Group in 1994 with the current CFO, John Newstead.

By coincidence, a few years later, at a conference related to his LodeStar work, he sat in on a presentation by the authors of the Environment Rating Scales (ERS) that changed everything. This is where Mark's vision — first scribbled on the back of a napkin! — showed how the rows and columns of the instrument easily lent themselves to creating an electronic scoring sheet. Working with the authors, Mark turned his vision into the ERS Data System. In time, to meet the changing needs of the ERS Community, professional development tools for the ERS were created to provide a deeper understanding of the "why" behind each of the ERS subscales and items.

Mark loved life. He lived on his terms and in the fast lane, always putting his family first. As Branagh Group evolved from 1994 to the present, Mark and John wanted the company to be a place where everyone loves the work they do, works with people they love, and has the ability to put their family first — including their work family. As the company grew from just two to 25 folks, their vision was fulfilled.

In classic Mark fashion, he had the foresight to plan for a time when Branagh Group would have to carry on without him. He put a plan in motion that relied on his team's strengths and experience, and which is now being seamlessly implemented. He also left behind a road map for his vision; Mark was deeply committed to the scales, the broader ERS Community, and improving the lives of all children. The team at Branagh Group is dedicated to continuing this vision and feel honored to carry his legacy forward.

Mark requested his family — work and personal — to not hold any kind of memorial service (and this will probably not come as a surprise to most). His family requested that we collect and send any personal stories that folks might have in lieu of a memorial service. If you have something you'd like to share, please email MarkMemories@BranaghGroup.com and we will be sure to pass it along.

Sincerely,

John Newstead, CEO & CFO, founding member, 30 years

Jennifer McMullen, President & COO, 16 years

Dave Clark, CIO & CTO, 23 years

Miel Newstead, 24 years

Mary Frances Lynch, 17 years

Ankur Patel, 17 years

Brenda Calhoun, 17 years

Sue Baysinger, 16 years

Michael Benitez, 16 years

Robin Bennett, 16 years

Tricia Sifford, 15 years

Erica Carlton, 14 years

Heather Boser, 14 years

Venu Gopal, 13 years

Alex Clark, 11 years

Sanjay Singh, 10 years

Matthew McMullen, 8 years

Tarah Kadzielawski, 6 years

Keri Anderson, 5 years

Andrea Keene, 5 years

Selina Poon, 2 years

Emily Ellis, 1 year

Hanna Galdos, 1 year

Kai Newstead, 1 year