

Ryan Henderson Endowed Music and Writing Scholarship



Ryan Henderson passed unexpectedly early in his senior year at Drake. Ryan's parents, Bill and Kathy, both Drake graduates, continue to strive to keep Ryan's spirit alive by identifying unsolicited opportunities to help others remove barriers or stresses that are impacting the quality of their lives. Ryan's parents also want to help individuals follow passions similar to Ryan's. These giving focuses truly reflect the essence of Ryan. In that spirit, Ryan's family has funded the Ryan Henderson Endowed Music and Writing Scholarship.

Ryan Henderson auditioned for and earned a music scholarship for his guitar talents before entering Drake University. For his audition, Ryan was assigned a classical guitar musical piece to learn. Ryan worked for hours in his basement learning the song he was to perform at the audition. It was a difficult piece and he used his guitar lesson time with his instructor to refine his performance.

A couple of weeks after Ryan auditioned, he received a letter indicating not only had he been admitted to the music program, he had received a music scholarship. Ryan was understandably proud. The daunting thought of additional auditions and recognition of the scholarship quickly ended Ryan's college search. Like his great-grandparents, grandmother, parents and uncles and aunts, Ryan was going to attend Drake.

During his sophomore year, Ryan began to realize "there are a lot of good guitar players in the world" and he changed his major to Writing with a minor in Music. This was a great choice for Ryan as he did not want to totally abandon his music. Keeping a minor in music also enabled him to keep the music scholarship he had worked so hard to earn.

Ryan enjoyed his writing classes and it was clear he was very capable. After Ryan passed, his parents received a wonderful letter from one of his professors who clearly enjoyed Ryan as a passionate student. Ryan also began taking business classes and used his writing skills to land a public policy internship. By the time he began his senior year, Ryan was projecting himself from young adult to an adult in the real world with ambitions and the desire to create a career.

Ryan's parents and his two siblings, Connor and Paige, cherish many memories of Ryan including his smile, courage, capacity for hard work and willingness to laugh at himself. Ryan pursued his interests with an intensity and focus that amazed his parents. Supporting others with shared interests of Ryan's truly keeps his spirit alive and present.