

Daniel Hollnsteiner, 1994 - 2015

"No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for his friends." This is a biblical verse from John chapter 15 verse 13. It's beautiful how this passage depicts Daniel's final moments on that fateful day in September of last year.

Daniel tried to save a friend whose kayak capsized in the frigid waters of Lake Tekapo in New Zealand. While holding on to an overturned kayak with two other friends and waiting to be rescued, Latifur, one of his buddies from the United Kingdom who did not know how to swim, urged Daniel to swim to a distant island for safety. Even though Daniel was a strong swimmer, he refused to leave his friends behind and ultimately succumbed to hypothermia; his two other friends survived. Daniel gave the most precious gift a person can ever give to another, his own life. He was truly a Man for Others.

Daniel was a very special young man. He was intelligent, athletic and took very good care of himself with daily visits to the gym. He loved soccer, was a big fan of the New York Rangers and an avid golfer. As a toddler his main goal was to keep up with his older brother. He would climb higher up the stairs than he had done the previous day, climb up to the top of bookshelves and cabinets.....you name it, he climbed it, the higher the better. He was always curious and getting into things that little kids shouldn't get into. He was fearless and simply uncontrollable but was such a delight to us.

In Daniel's short life, he achieved remarkable successes. At Monsignor Farrell High School in Staten Island, he worked his way into the National Honor Society and was a member of the varsity golf team. At SUNY Buffalo, he was on the Dean's List. He was able to accomplish all these accolades through perseverance and hard work. He set goals for himself and did not stop until he attained them.

How blessed we were to have 21 amazing years with Daniel, who was such a wonderful son and brother. He was a good person and saw the good in everyone. He had that charming smile that could get him out of any contentious situation. A smile that matched his personality. He was a genuine person too. In the midst of our grief, we heard many happy memories fondly told about him. One such story was a prank that he did to two of his friends at Monash in Australia, Sarah and Steffanie, who are here today. He removed Sarah's mattress from her bed and dumped it in Steffanie's room. It took Steffanie and Sarah a while to figure it all out. – yes, Daniel again! The ongoing prank war carried out by the three of them strengthened their special bonds. Daniel referred to them, along with Tyler and his buddies from Buffalo, as his lifelong friends. Daniel was simply everyone's friend and favorite person.

Nor was UB simply a fun place for him. In addition to the challenges of figuring out how to get from one building to another with minimum exposure to below-zero winter temperatures and three-foot snowdrifts, he soon realized that being a UB student meant hard work handed out by expert and demanding professors. It's here at UB that the young and carefree Daniel turned into the mature and serious Daniel who set off for Australia to fulfill his career goals – to get into international business ventures linking

Asia and America. While never giving up the fun part, it was here at UB that he reflected seriously on his future in the world of work and took steps to make it happen. The privilege of a UB education formed part of his aspirations.

It is difficult to make sense of Daniel's sudden death, especially when he was at the peak of his happiness living life to the fullest. Yet, we often hear the saying that things happen for a reason. Is it possible one of the other boys who survived in the frigid water that fateful day with Daniel will discover the next cure for cancer or make a life-changing scientific discovery, or simply be a better person because of the experience? We will never know and will just have to trust God. Daniel would not want us or anyone else he touched to give up. He would want his brothers, Philip and William, to do their best, be successful and be good persons. He would want them to take up the torch of his unfinished life. He is our inspiration to do good in this world. He is our hero. We miss him tremendously but our faith in God gives us strength and healing. We look forward to a happy reunion and eternal happiness with him when the time comes.

We would like to thank the University at Buffalo for this very special memorial service which means so much to us. To all of Daniel's UB friends and classmates, thank you for being here today. It is clear that Daniel touched your lives in a very special way, just as you touched his. To Professor Stephen Dunnett, thank you for all your support. You were instrumental in helping us bring Daniel home from New Zealand.

Yes, we have lost a son, brother, classmate, student and friend. But to the many friends and families who loved him and whom he loved back now treasure happy memories of his kindness, his reflective self, his love of fun and passion for adventure and ultimately, his heroism. And to Daniel, we know you are watching us right now. Thank you for your love and all the joy and happiness you brought into our lives. We love you very much.