

Joe Kareta Memorial Scholarship Endowment



This endowment was established in 2011 for a student going on to study Criminal Justice at Westfield State University.

Joe Kareta lived in Westfield for his entire short life of 22 years. He attended Mater Dolorosa Elementary School in Holyoke, Papermill Elementary School, North Middle School and Westfield High School. He received his associate's degree from Holyoke Community College in 2008, and graduated from Westfield State University in May 2010 with a B.S. degree in Criminal Justice. He successfully completed the Massachusetts State Police Exam, as well as the 120 hour Emergency Medical Technician Program and written test.

Joe was a great kid, a wonderful son, brother, and friend. He was quiet and unassuming, but he had an infectious smile and a great sense of humor.

Additionally, Joe was kind, generous, loving, and compassionate. He genuinely cared about others and never expected anything in return. Joe Kareta was a special person.

He had a passion for all sports, especially baseball and basketball. Joe began playing organized baseball when he was 7 years old, starting with T-ball. He continued playing for the Westfield Little League, Major League, and Babe Ruth Leagues. As a starting member of the Foster House Baseball Championship Team, Joe helped his team to win the City Cup in 2001, and the league title in 2002. He was an All Star for Westfield North from 1999-2003, and his teams were the District Champs as well as the Western Massachusetts Tournament Champs in 2001.

Joe started playing organized basketball in 1996 as a third grader with the Mater Dolorosa Saints in the CYO League. He went on to play with the Westfield Suburban League and Westfield High School. He was a skillful player, and won the Knights of Columbus Free Throw Contest in 1999. During his freshman year at Westfield High School, Joe set the team record for three point shots.

In recent years, Joe showed a passion for snowboarding. He boarded often at Mount Snow and Butternut Ski Areas. He medaled in the Mountain Dew Vertical Challenge at Butternut and Okemo.

On the day he died, August 28, 2010, Joe did five good deeds that were told to us by the community. First, he filled in for someone who was unable to make it into work. Then, he surprised his cousin (who was his boss) with a Danish. Later, Joe came to the rescue of a lady who was in need of a ride to the grocery store. Next, he cut the grass for his elderly uncle. Finally, Joe picked up the mail for his aunt/godmother. That's where he was tragically struck down by an out-of-control driver.

Joe's absence is a loss we feel every day. Before getting into a car, think about how speeding, drinking, and texting can kill. Think how lives can be ruined, in seconds, on both sides of the spectrum, with one senseless act. The devastation our family has endured is immeasurable.

Sadly, Joe never had the opportunity to fulfill his goals because he died 98 days – exactly 14 weeks – after graduation. On the day we buried him, we received a postcard asking him to interview for a police position. Needless to say, that never happened.

Therefore, we say to you, make the most of each day and any opportunity that is afforded you because you can never be guaranteed the time you will have to make your dreams come true. Remember, never forget where you come from, and never be afraid to help those in need.

Since the accident, we have been able to fund two scholarship endowments with the generosity and support of Joe's family, relatives, friends, and community. It has been quite overwhelming.

To say that Joe affected many lives would be an understatement. The people he touched will never forget him. He would be amazed at the outpouring of support. We can only hope to move forward with our loss and cherish our countless loving memories of Joe.

Joe's dream died that August day. Hopefully this scholarship will help young students find their calling in the field of Criminal Justice and it will give them the opportunity to better themselves through education and service. It may help to make someone's dreams come true.

Please think of Joe from time to time and say a little prayer for him, as well as his family, who were left behind to mourn his passing.

We would like to offer our sincere congratulations to you and extend wishes of success in your future endeavors.

Written by: Fred & Kathy Kareta (parents), and Kerry Kareta (sister)

January 2011