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## Scholarship endowment grows out of student's passion, gift from family friend

Nearly two years after Oakland University freshman Eric Pauli's death, his parents Ed and Dawn still hear stories about the impact their son made on so many.

A pre-engineering major at Oakland and also an accomplished musician, Eric was an enthusiastic member of the Golden Grizzlies Band, best known for its performances at the university's athletic events. Eric was also passionate about family, friends, his yellow Pontiac G5 – which he affectionately named "Natalie" – and hockey, among many other things.

He was 18 years old when he lost his life in a tragic snowmobiling accident on Feb. 2, 2014. Since then, his mother, Dawn, CAS '88, said her family has received countless condolences, memories and gifts as tributes to Eric.

"Recently, out of the blue, the mother of a friend of Eric's sent us a message about what a tremendous impact Eric made on her son when he was a freshman (in high school) and Eric was a senior," said Dawn.



*Eric Pauli was a pre-engineering major at Oakland.*

"Eric helped this shy boy come out of his shell, made him feel included and influenced him so much that he is now a section leader in marching band."

The Paulis recently created the Eric T. Pauli Memorial Scholarship in Eric's memory, which will provide ongoing scholarship support for students pursuing non-music careers, but who still have a passion for music. The endowment will be funded over multiple years through memorial gifts from family, friends and community members.

"Of Eric's many interests, I think what made him happiest was being a part of the band in high school. We were so excited when he joined Grizzly Band and continued to be involved in music at Oakland," said Dawn. "This scholarship helps us make that connection. Through it we will be able to help another Oakland student. It's something that I really think Eric would be proud of."

The idea to create the fund grew out of a scholarship initiated by longtime family friend Claudette Zolkowski, CAS '89, who is also director of communications and marketing for OU's School of Business Administration.

"Her gesture left us speechless," said Dawn. "Many people generously gifted us with memorial donations in honor of Eric, so we knew we wanted to do something that could represent Eric and help us keep his spirit alive."

Zolkowski's \$1,000 annual named scholarship gift came just before the holidays, during Oakland's All-University Fund Drive. Zolkowski and Dawn – also a former OU staffer – met as OU students and over the years have grown to be best friends.

"People were important to Eric. He connected with them, he cared about them," said Zolkowski, "and they knew it. He befriended everybody, old, young, studious, athletic, religious and otherwise."

Zolkowski shared a story about how Eric once missed a birthday party for one of her children. It was the first party he couldn't make. "At the very next opportunity, he scheduled time to come to our house to celebrate with them. He brought McDonald's, complete with toys, ate with them and played with them for quite some time."

There were many reasons Zolkowski gave the gift – to let Dawn and her family know that Eric would always be remembered, to continue the pattern of touching people's lives and to give him a gift, as the Paulis and Zolkowskis would sometimes celebrate Christmas together, said Zolkowski.

"All that Eric was – caring, connected with people, and his ability to let people know they mattered – he got from his mother and father. They are two incredibly special people who always did, and are still doing, the small things in people's lives that make a difference," Zolkowski

"There's so little I can do at this point to ease their loss, but I believe they find some sense of comfort in knowing that Eric made a difference and that he will not be forgotten."

Kenneth Kroesche, director of the Golden Grizzlies Band, said although Eric was a Golden Grizzlies Band member for a short time, it was obvious that music and his new friends were a central part of his life at Oakland.

Learn how to make a contribution to the Eric T. Pauli Memorial Scholarship by visiting <http://bit.ly/EricPauli>.