

Stephen J. Chipolis Memorial Scholarship

HISTORY:



Stephen J. Chipolis worked in the Wyoming Area School District for 10 years. In that time he touched the lives of everyone he met through his positive attitude and always-present smile and “Have a nice day!” His optimism and kindness persisted, even through the emotional pain of losing his son, Matthew and, later, the physical pain that accompanied his aggressive cancer. Steve’s memory lives on in the memories of the many who met him. He was a constant example of the simplicity of extending kindness to everyone.

Robert Lemoncelli, Wyoming Area faculty, is one of 26 area educators selected as members of the 2018 IMPACT program. Rob selected as his required project the development of the Stephen J. Chipolis Memorial Scholarship. IMPACT is a Leadership in Education Program offered through Leadership Wilkes-Barre. “I was convinced the only thing I could do was to develop a scholarship in Steve Chipolis’s memory,” Bob remembers thinking. Steve died the summer of 2017. “He impacted my life as he did so many others in our building. I had to do this.” This ongoing yearly scholarship will be funded through various fundraising projects. Rob Lemoncelli and his scholarship committee will select the recipient of this scholarship. For the inaugural year, 2018, Mrs. Chipolis and her son Christopher selected the recipients from the Fallen Warrior applicant pool.

Stephen J Chipolis



Everyone has a story for yesterday, an outlook for today and a plan for tomorrow. A past, present and future if you will. Please sit back and listen to this story about Stephen J Chipolis. Steve’s story for yesterday began in November 1961 when his parents Robert and Mary began instilling in him the values of integrity, trust, compassion, commitment to your promises and most importantly love of God and family. He lived by this and had one unwavering goal – to one day pass these traits on to his children and to be a role

model for them. The story continues when he meets the love of his life, Gina Romani and for the next 28 years he remains steadfast to the core values that defined him. Keeping the vows of marriage sacred and the commitment to family at the forefront of his life. They built their house together which became a home when they moved into it in 1989. They filled their home with many cherished memories as they raised their sons Matthew and Christopher. Steve kept detailed journals for and about his family carefully marking each event in their lives. Steve loved woodworking and his attention to detail could be seen in every aspect of the construction of their home; from the great room with vaulted ceilings and a balcony office overlooking the family gathering area, to the custom cabinetry in their kitchen. He meticulously crafted oak shutters to perfectly fit the oversized windows. In every project he took on, he executed his plans to near perfection. He took a lot of pride in the completed projects because they were all done for the love of family. When he wasn’t working on his home, he was building scale models of trucks and other toys to present to his sons as gifts. Nearly every Christmas as Matthew and Christopher were growing up they received a keepsake toy to cherish for years to come. This was Steve’s way of using his hobby to show his family that he was always thinking of them. Everything Steve did showed his selfless commitment to family.

Steve’s family shared his same interests in hunting, fishing and enjoyed summer vacations in Black Lake, New York. They also enjoyed watching the Pittsburgh Steelers and would have a super bowl party when the team made

it to the final game. However, these weren't the best games that Steve liked to watch. He never missed a game when his sons played for the West Pittston Rams and later for the Wyoming Area Warriors. Steve made many lasting friendships at these events and those friends saw, in him, those core values he developed from his youth. His new friends came to trust him almost immediately as his demeanor showed how being truthful to yourself and others is the key to building and keeping lasting friendships. These values have defined his life. Nothing complicated. Nothing overwhelming. Seems simple, right? Well let's throw in some of life's unexpected hurdles.

The yesterday story changed on May 12, 2011 when Matthew was fatally injured in a motorcycle accident. Steve remained steadfast for his family. Not giving up on the values that shaped him into the man and father he had become. Although this tore his heart out, he assured Gina and Christopher that "everything will be alright". The family held these words as a motto to live by. This simple statement summed up, to some extent, that holding true to the values he lived by and those that formed a foundation of lasting friendships would be some respite for this awful tragedy that turned their life upside down.

The today story played out over the next few months and years. Gina began her own battle with breast cancer in 2012. Steve's only brother died unexpectedly in 2013. Steve had developed tonsillar cancer in 2014. In 2015, Steve went for his annual checkup in which a scan showed that Steve had developed liver cancer. By 2016, Steve had over 70% of his liver removed.

Steve's family kept their faith in God and were supported by Corpus Christi parish and Monsignor John Sempa. His genuine concern and spiritual support in their darkest times strengthened their faith in God. He helped them carry their cross over the next few years. His trip to Fox Chase Hospital, to visit Steve, Gina and Christopher while they were away from their support network, was like having the cavalry arrive at the perfect time. Steve was just recovering from his surgery with tonsillar cancer. A hundred miles from their comfort zone, and Monsignor Sempa walks into the room. They were quite astonished since they were so far from home and he cared that much to make this long trip for Steve and to represent their parish family. The energy could be felt all the way back to the Wyoming Valley. The spiritual energy that let them know once again that "everything is going to be alright".

It was only recently, in June 2017, that the physicians who treated Steve had given the news to the family that Steve did not have much time left to be with them. The news dealt yet another devastating blow to their recent medical history. Gina, already emotionally exhausted, said to Steve, "We can do whatever you want, so what do you want to do? Steve's reply was, "I thought I was already doing it". Perplexed, Gina said to him "what's that?" He simply stated, "I want to grow old with you." Although he was burdened with many hardships, many have remarked how Steve never gave up and never complained - not to the hospice nurses or anyone caring for



him. As the cancer spread and Steve slowly lost muscle control and it became harder to understand his speech, Gina's frustration grew. Together with several family members in earshot of what would be their last dialogue, Gina just leaned close to his bedside and said to him, "I love you." In reply, as if his speech was not impaired, Steve clearly spoke the words, "I love you too."

So as the story unfolds into the future, their story for tomorrow, Steve's goal of passing his traits on to his children could be summed up by what happened next. In a quiet moment on the day before Steve passed away, Christopher, recognizing a strong family support in the home with them, walked over to his mother, embraced her while she was sitting in the chair close to Steve's bedside and said to her, "Don't worry Mom, we're going to be alright."

Steve's spirit will live on in his son.

RIP: Steve ♥

RIP: Matthew ♥

God Bless You Steve. We all love you.

Criteria: Applicant must be a graduating Wyoming Area senior athlete who plans on attending a certificate program, a trade, technical school, community college, or a 2 - 4 year college or university. All majors will be considered.

Essay Required: Choose one of the following essay prompts, and write a solid essay of at least 500 word. Identify the prompt you selected in the first line of your essay:

1. State any special personal or family circumstances affecting your need for financial assistance.
2. Select an experience from your own life and explain how it influenced your development.
3. Describe an experience where you were **unsuccessful** in reaching your goal. What lessons did you learn from this experience?