

Donor Profile

Remembering Haakon Povey

New Award Supports Graduates Who Have Persevered

by Michelle Lancaster

Losing her son at just 18 years of age was devastating for Natasha Keith and her family. Before Haakon Edward Povey's (*pronounced Haw-kon*) sudden passing on January 30, 2025, Natasha says he had made plans to return to school in the fall and dreamed of becoming an underwater welder. He had also applied for his first job that same week and was working hard to rebuild his life. "He had hopes, dreams, and plans for the future. And those who loved him saw the strength and determination within him," explains Natasha, adding that he was a "young man whose life was marked by both deep challenges and remarkable resilience."

"Haakon sadly did not get the chance to walk across the stage and celebrate graduation," she says. "Because of this, we wanted to honour him by supporting students who have worked hard to achieve that dream."

To that end, Natasha and her family worked with the St. James Scholarship Foundation to establish the **Haakon Povey Memorial Award**. The award recognizes one student each at both **Collège Sturgeon Heights Collegiate** and **Jameswood Alternative School**—high schools that Haakon attended. It was awarded for the first time in June 2025 and supports students who have faced their own barriers and challenges yet continued to persevere. The award is valued at \$500 per student.

"It celebrates resilience, courage, and the determination it takes to keep going even when the path is difficult," explains Natasha. "While we can no longer fight for our son's future alongside him, through Haakon we can help support the future of other young people as they reach this important milestone."



A Life Cut Short

Like many young people, Haakon faced difficult challenges, including addiction and mental health struggles. “We always say that when he was young, all he wanted was a true friend,” explains Natasha.

As he got older, Haakon connected with other young people. Unfortunately, they introduced him first to cocaine and then to methamphetamines. He was addicted to the latter instantly, at just 13 years old. “Along with friendship he was handed addiction,” she says. “No one wants to be an addict, so it’s just heartbreaking the path that he was sent on from such a young age.”

Natasha and her family noticed a behaviour shift right away. When they discovered he was taking drugs, they moved mountains to help him—from securing spots in treatment programs, to searching for him in unsafe situations, and making multiple calls to law enforcement. All of this happened during the Covid-19 pandemic, adding another layer of difficulty for Haakon and his family. Natasha stresses how easy it is for a young teen trying to fit in to develop an addiction that can destroy their life. Haakon struggled for five years to get better. While he had good days, in the end, addiction won. “It’s not how his story should have ended.”

He was found alone in an apartment downtown. While Natasha acknowledges that she will never know the whole story, she suspects his companions fled when he overdosed. Now she advocates for greater awareness of the impact of drugs on youth, better supports and services for young people, and the importance of life-saving interventions—all to meet the needs of the current drug crisis. The family handed out Narcan kits at Haakon’s funeral. “It can happen to anyone’s child,” she stresses.

Honouring Haakon

While Haakon struggled with addiction, it didn’t define him. He was known for his caring heart, his sense of humour, and the strong connections he formed with those around him. “He had a way of making people feel seen and heard, even



when he was struggling himself,” says Natasha. “Despite these obstacles, Haakon never stopped trying to move forward. Even through the hardest moments, he continued to smile and find ways to make others laugh,” says Natasha.

Music was a big part of Haakon’s life and often served as his therapy. Natasha notes that he could find a beat in any mood and expressed himself through music under the artist name “Skittles,” a nickname he carried with pride. One of his favourite things to say was “it’s all good,” a phrase that she says reflected Haakon’s ability to keep going even when life was difficult.

Through the Haakon Povey Memorial Award, Natasha says his story will continue to inspire others. “[It] reminds us that every young person deserves compassion, support, and the opportunity to succeed,” she says.

Bruce Alexander is the President of the St. James Scholarship Foundation. “I’ve been working with Haakon’s family for some time to establish this award as a sub-fund in perpetuity with the Winnipeg Foundation to honour his life. We deeply appreciate the generous donation from Natasha and her family and express our deep condolences to them for the loss of their son,” he says. To contribute to the Haakon Povey Memorial Award, visit: <https://www.mycharitytools.com/gift/wpfgdn/donate?fund=6050>.

Brighter Days. Haakon a year before he passed away (*far left*); Haakon at 13 with his family dog Barkley (*left*); Haakon’s last Christmas Eve get together with his family (*right*), including (*from top left*) brother David, mother Natasha, father Todd, sister Shyllynn, and brother Ryden (*seated*). Santa has visited the family every Christmas Eve since Haakon was a baby.