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Student's Legacy Lives on in Jeremy Warnick Center for Student Accessibility Services

With generous donations to relocate the Center to the heart of campus and create a memorial scholarship fund, student's memory helps undergrads with disabilities succeed at RWU



June 6, 2016 | Justin Wilder

BRISTOL, R.I. – Although Jeremy Warnick spent only a short time as a student at Roger Williams University before he passed away in 2005, his legacy continues to touch the lives of generations of students through the support system he discovered as an undergraduate.

As a freshman grappling with a learning disability, Jeremy sought the resources at RWU's office of Student Accessibility Services (SAS) for the additional help he needed to navigate college life. Because the foundation provided via SAS meant so much to him, his parents knew it was where they could give back and keep Jeremy's spirit alive at Roger Williams.

Longtime supporters of the RWU students, the Warnicks recently made a gift to relocate SAS to the academic and cultural hub of the University. Housed on the first floor of the University Library, the Jeremy Warnick Center for Student Accessibility Services offers a central location on campus for students to gain academic support surrounded by the library's advanced technology, as well as information on tools and resources for students with disabilities.

“After Jeremy passed away, Roger Williams was there for us – in so many ways – and really showed us that his legacy belonged at the University,” says Jeremy’s father, Craig Warnick, “We wanted to help students who have similar academic challenges as Jeremy had.”

Each year, the Center supports 10 percent of the undergraduate population at the University, with numbers increasing annually. Lisa Bauer, associate director for Student Accessibility Services, expects to see attendance figures continue to climb with the new locale.

“Students understand the need for support and are becoming more comfortable seeking our services, particularly now with the Center’s accessible and confidential location on the first floor of the University Library,” Bauer says.

In addition to direct support of the Center, the Warnicks developed a memorial scholarship fund in 2007. The Jeremy Warnick Scholarship awards annual financial aid to students who, despite documented learning disabilities, have succeeded in a University setting. To date, the scholarship fund has distributed 13 awards to 11 students.

Friends and family of the Warnicks joined past and present scholarship recipients for the grand opening of the Center. At the celebration, the 2015-16 scholarship was awarded to Sean Joyce, a criminal justice major and psychology minor.

“I feel his legacy here – it will go on and on forever with all of the students that will be touched by this,” says Pamela Warnick, Jeremy’s mother.

Jamie Warner ’15, a scholarship recipient who works in public relations in New York City, says the academic support she received from the scholarship and SAS helped her succeed at RWU.

“Without Jeremy’s family’s wonderful contribution to my education, I would not have been able to accomplish everything I did and achieve the goals I set for myself,” Warner says.

As a past scholarship recipient, Kathleen (Dawson) Pellecchia ’11 says the Center’s centralized location – to a part of campus that all students frequent – demonstrates the University’s commitment to the success of every student.

“Everybody goes to the library throughout their time as a student at Roger Williams,” says Pellecchia, a mental health care partner at Cambridge Health Alliance who recently married her college sweetheart. “I think this will increase awareness of the Center, which provides essential support services on campus.”