

Teen's Generosity Lives on Through the Gift of Donation

Avery Kranski | Tissue donor

When Kari Kranski remembers her son, Avery, she thinks about friendship and generosity. One memory involves a time in high school when a classmate could not afford a jacket. Avery went to more than a dozen of their friends – a group that called themselves “the squad” – to ask everyone to chip in \$20. When they had gathered enough donations, the squad made their way to their classmate’s house in the rain on the night of his birthday to surprise him with the jacket.

Avery’s life was defined by friendship and family. “All of his friends were older than him by a solid year,” Kari said. “If they needed help with homework or a place to stay, he was there. He really liked to help.”

Avery also excelled in academics, particularly math. After finishing high school with a 4.25 GPA, he attended George Mason University as a cybersecurity engineering major. He loved gaming, music, and his pets. He was athletically gifted as a cross-country runner.

It was a tremendous shock when Avery died unexpectedly at 18. He had registered as a donor when he turned 17, and in the midst of their grief, his parents honored that decision.

Now Kari takes comfort in knowing her son ultimately helped others. “When people talk about Avery I try to shift it,” she said. “Yes, it is incredibly hard that he is not here. But he’s making a difference.”

Avery’s gifts have helped nearly 30 people, including a paramedic who was able to return to work and care for her children after a knee repair. Burn patients benefited from skin grafts, a baby received a lifesaving artery, and two people had their sight restored.

Kari is determined to continue to honor Avery’s legacy. She set up an annual blood drive every September, around the time of her son’s birthday. Originally it took place in Richmond, but now the location is Texas, where she has relocated to be closer to family. In addition to giving blood, Kari encourages people to register as organ, eye, and tissue donors.

She honors Avery’s memory in many other ways as well, including keeping up with the squad, driving the 2016 Honda Civic that her son saved for and bought on his own, and taking every opportunity to talk about donation at home or at work. “Because of Avery, others get to have their life and thrive,” she said. “He is going to be here forever. There’s a ripple effect.”

