

# Bordentown Township teen who survived car accident receives scholarship to study nursing

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BORDENTOWN TOWNSHIP — After surviving a life-threatening car accident almost two years ago, T.J. Drahuschak is one step closer to achieving his dream of becoming a nurse.

The 18-year-old township resident recently received a \$500 scholarship from Kelly's Heroes, a nonprofit founded by Kerry McKean Kelly and some family friends to honor her late husband, Steve Kelly, who died of pancreatic cancer in 2015. The organization aims to spread awareness for pancreatic cancer and raise funds for cancer research.

Steve Kelly was formerly a journalist at the Bucks County Courier Times in Pennsylvania, a sister newspaper of the Burlington County Times, and at the Philadelphia Inquirer.

The Kelly's Heroes scholarship recognizes students at two high schools in Mercer County who plan to pursue a career in nursing.

"He was so appreciative of his nurses," Kelly, of East Windsor, said of her husband. "We thought an appropriate way to give back to schools and honor Steve's spirit was to honor a student pursuing a career in nursing or other health care field."

T.J. was the recipient from Notre Dame High School, where McKean Kelly's daughter, Kacey, attended school while her husband was sick.

He was honored at a reception at the Princeton Marriott at Forrestal on June 7.

Rebecca Meehan, the other honoree, from Hightstown High School, was also recognized.

T.J. became interested in entering the medical field after spending 105 days in the hospital as a result of a car accident in October 2015. He was riding in the passenger seat of a friend's vehicle on their way to school when his friend lost control on Route 129 and the vehicle flipped into oncoming traffic.

T.J. suffered 16 broken bones and needed to have half of his liver, right kidney and spleen removed. He was treated at Capital Health Regional Medical Center in Trenton and the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia. Each day in the hospital was extremely difficult, he said.

"It wasn't fun. It was waking up and just trying to get better," he said.

But his nurses brought some light into his days of recovery and rehabilitation, and inspired him to become a nurse himself.

"The nurses that came and saw me every single day, they don't get enough credit," T.J. said. "I want to touch every one of my patients like they touched me."

He plans to study nursing at William Paterson University in Passaic County in the fall.

McKean Kelly said she sees the same "strength and courage" her husband had in T.J. She believes he would be pleased to see his legacy honored through students like him.

"He was a very humble guy," she said of her husband. "But I know he would be very honored to see kids like T.J. pursue a health care degree, at least a little, in his name."