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NEWS

Friends and family of the student pilot who died in a Wauwatosa plane crash have organized a chess tournament in his honor

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An untimely loss in the Brookfield community is continuing to bring people together as a memorial chess tournament will be played in the name of Daniel Perelman — a young pilot who lost his life in a plane crash on May 26.

The event will be held on Oct. 15 at the Embassy Suites in Brookfield, and is sponsored by Brookfield Academy, the Daniel Gives Back Foundation and the nonprofit Power of Pawns — started by Krish Sharma, a friend of Perelman's and a junior at Brookfield Academy.

When Sharma first learned about Daniel's accident he was devastated, but shortly after he said he was driven by a desire to honor his friend and classmate.

“Daniel was personally someone that I looked up to, so I just want to do something to uphold his legacy in the community because I think everyone knows he had a big impact here,” said Sharma.

Daniel's father, Benny Perelman, echoed Sharma's sentiments, saying that the events he does with the newly formed Daniel Gives Back Foundation are a way to make sure Daniel's presence is not lost.

“What happened, happened and our lives will never be the same, but (the Daniel Gives Back Foundation is) a sort of therapy for us,” said Perelman.

“We just don’t want to let him be forgotten ... five years from now we would like to have his name associated with a continuance of good deeds in the community because that was the kind of person he was.”

Daniel Perelman was a U.S. Junior Open chess champion

A competitive and passionate individual, Daniel’s chess journey started in first grade where he occasionally played chess with his father. As he played more, it became clear that Daniel had a talent for the game, and he was even approached by a Brookfield Academy teacher who urged him to continue pursuing chess.

At 11 years old, Daniel would eventually go on to win the U.S. Junior Open, and as a member of the Brookfield Academy chess team, he would contribute to the school winning a conference championship in 2018.

Perelman said in many ways his son grew up through the game of chess as it taught him many important things about life.

“Chess is about intellect but it is also about character,” said Perelman, “Daniel wanted to win but you can’t always do that, so it taught him how to build confidence and how to think positively.”

Along his chess journey Sharma described Daniel as a kind figure who was always caring for and inspiring others around him. Now as Sharma gets older he says Daniel’s positivity remains with him constantly.

“He was just a good person and I feel the only way that I can live up to his legacy is to carry it on by trying to be the best that I can be,” said Sharma.

Head of School at Brookfield Academy Doug Ricci said he witnessed the impact that Daniel had at his school and is honored to be able to support an event that honors the boy.

"Throughout his life, Daniel Perelman made a positive impact on those around him. While it is heartbreaking that he won't have additional opportunities to share his many gifts, it is wonderful to see how students like Krish have been inspired to share their passions and skills with the community and to honor Daniel's memory in the process," said Ricci.

Daniel Gives Back Foundation will organize more community events

The first annual Daniel Perelman Memorial is just the latest example of how Daniel's passing has inspired kindness within the community.

The first week after his death a "Deeds for Daniel" movement started in which over 1,000 individuals pledged to commit acts of kindness in Daniel's name.

Additionally, through the Daniel Gives Back Foundation organized a blood drive in July.

As for what is next for the Daniel Gives Back Foundation, Perelman said he is working with the aviation club of Northwestern to help create courses that will teach young pilots about safety.

Perelman also said he wants to continue doing events that promote social responsibility, because he said these types of events embody the type of person his son was.

For Sharma, he is focusing on his non-profit, Power of Pawns, which seeks to provide chess lessons to individuals who may not have access to them otherwise.

He also said he is committed to making sure the Daniel Perelman Memorial Tournament is held each year. This year's edition, which is open to all ages and talent levels, already has more than 80 players signed up.

Sharma said his friendship with Daniel started at the board and he hopes this event can allow others to have a similar experience.

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Daniel Perelman was a stand-out student at Brookfield academy before electing to attend college at Northwestern University. *Benny Perelman*



Among other things, Daniel Perelman was known for his chess acumen as he won many tournaments growing up. *Benny Perelman*



In 2018 Daniel won a chess conference championship with the Brookfield Academy chess team. *Benny Perelman*