

Ryan French Thomas

Oct. 5, 1995 – April 16, 2018

Ryan French Thomas, 22, was born in Fairfax VA, and died unexpectedly at home Monday. In his short time with us, he was loved by many, accomplished much, and touched and influenced so many people's lives in meaningful ways. He attended Marshall Road Elementary, Thoreau Middle School, and James Madison High School here in his hometown of Vienna.

For many summers while growing up, Ryan attended the American Youth Foundation's Camp Miniwanca in Shelby, Michigan, like his Great Uncle, Grandmother, Aunt, Uncle, Mom, and Brothers. His many adventures there included backpacking, canoeing, long distance bicycling treks, and kayaking on the Great Lakes. Several of his wonderful friends traveled here today for this service. Ryan became a living example of the AYF's goal to: "Aspire Nobly • Adventure Daringly • Serve Humbly."

While in high school, Ryan was a member of the wrestling team, the Men's Choir, and their "Madrigals" select men's and women's choir for three years. Ryan decided that he wanted to become a firefighter or paramedic, and shortly after graduating high school, he enrolled at Northern Virginia Community College to focus on this avocation. He earned an Associate in Applied Science degree in Emergency Medical Services and a Paramedic Career Studies Certificate, which will be awarded next month.

While taking classes, Ryan also decided to volunteer at Fairfax County Fire and Rescue, at Station 8 in Annandale. He picked this station partly because it was "one of the busiest" and would give him the most experience. He worked his way up from helping with Bingo and assisting with restocking the ambulances, assisting as a "rider" on emergency runs, getting certified as an ambulance driver, to becoming a team leader on emergency responses. He was proud of each new experience he learned and felt lucky that he was carefully mentored and trained by the fine and caring professional staff – his "second family" – at Station 8. For his extraordinary volunteer service – in 2016 he volunteered over 2800 hours while taking classes - Ryan was awarded the President's Lifetime Achievement Award.

Ryan felt fortunate to be hired at the George Washington University Hospital in May 2017 as an Emergency Room Technician, where he loved learning about how medical trauma care is provided after the patient has arrived. Working in a teaching hospital, such as GWU, immersed him in a culture and environment where he could watch, learn, assist, ask questions, along with the nurses, doctors, and resident physicians. He shared numerous stories of life saving situations, how they handled them, and how any question he could ask "what should we", "why did we", or "could we have" were answered with patience and generosity. He loved his "third family" at GWU Hospital and the knowledge and experience they generously shared with him.

Ryan was loved fully and deeply at home by his parents, Chris and Bets, and his two brothers Adam, and Jack. His Aunts, Uncles, Cousin, many of his lifelong friends and neighbors, who also have known and loved him since his childhood, are here with us today. In his few hours of spare time, Ryan loved riding his motorcycle, "slack lining", rock climbing, playing video games, and spending time with his brothers and many friends. We have lost an inspirational, bold, funny, good, incredibly generous and helpful young man. Help us to honor Ryan by carrying a piece of him in your heart as we also "Strive to be our own self, At our very best, All the time."