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## Family honors David Bourassa with scholarship for mental health students

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David Bourassa. | Photo courtesy of Emily Bourassa

**POSTED BY: LAURA BAILEY** MARCH 23, 2026

**by Alexa Furniss | TBE correspondent | March 23, 2026 |**

Karen, Emily and Maddie Bourassa turned their grief into something lasting. After losing their father, David J. Bourassa, in 2024 following his battle with schizoaffective disorder, the family set out to honor not just his memory, but the kindness he showed every day. What began as a simple tribute—a heartfelt message and a few T-shirts—quickly grew into the David J. Bourassa Memorial Scholarship Fund, a living legacy dedicated to helping others and carrying forward Dave’s quiet, enduring message: be kind.

Shortly after David’s passing, his youngest daughter, Maddie, made a tribute post to her father with the saying “Be like Dave,” followed by “Be kind, eat cookies.” Dave was known as a kind and loving soul who always had a smile on his face, no matter what he was going through, and he also had a particular liking for cookies. The message behind it is that if everyone could be like Dave, then the world would be a better place.

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saying “Be like Dave. Be kind. Eat cookies.” With the money made from selling tee shirts, they soon came up with the idea of beginning a scholarship.

When the Bourassas went to The Main Street Foundation to begin the scholarship, they were told they needed \$25,000 to start it. Determined, they started raising more money through fundraisers and soon met the goal.

“It’s unbelievable. The Main Street Foundation was rooting for us because we had five years to raise \$25,000, and we did it in a year and a half,” said Karen Bourassa, wife of David Bourassa.

“We wanted to make sure that his memory was long lasting. And so then we did a bunch of fundraisers, and we eventually got there,” stated Emily Bourassa, daughter of David Bourassa. “We made the \$25,000 so that it’s endowed now and it will last forever.”



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The scholarship means many things to the family, but above all, it's a reminder to be kind like David, who was always kind even in his hardest moments.

“It's a reminder for us to just keep spreading kindness and being us and keep making him proud,” stated Emily. “When we go out into the world, we need to make sure that we are being like Dave, we're being gentle, we're being kind, we're being thoughtful.”

“A lot of people thought maybe he was quiet, shy, a little introverted, but they had no idea what he was dealing with or what he was battling,” stated Emily. “And he was still showing up with a smile. We wanted to show him we were proud of him. We wanted to keep the message alive.”

The scholarship will be given out to students pursuing higher education, specifically in the mental health field.

“We want to make sure that the young adults going into the mental health field have what they need, and that we can help them have what they need to be successful as they start their careers and begin their education,” stated Emily Bourassa. “We want them to be helpers, and we want them to help people like my dad. We also want the mental health system to improve. We want them to be educated and make changes.”

They will soon be giving out their first scholarship in May or June of this year, and it is a moment they are looking forward to.

“We're looking forward to handing the first scholarship out, and I'm hoping when they receive the scholarship that they understand how Dave was,” stated Emily. “I want them to

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their community. Many people came to their aid through

funding, even strangers who did not have the chance to know David.

“To see so many people show support for us was very heartwarming, support coming from unexpected places,” stated Emily. “It’s nice to see it stay in the community so that we can help people that we know or have yet to meet who live near us. My dad grew up in Bristol and has been in Bristol all his life, so I like that it stays home.”

They hope David’s memory is continued through this scholarship and that it also stands as a reminder that if you are struggling with mental health, you can find people in your community to help support you.

“I just wish people, if they are struggling with mental health, would talk about it,” stated Karen. “They should talk to their family, their friends, their doctors, and just know there is help out there.”

For those looking to donate to the scholarship fund, visit <https://www.mainstreetfoundation.org/bourassa-scholarship>

For those looking to purchase tee shirts, visit <https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfw4YVo128w3sczp2pO7kjMqVLp5k2YvxGDzCb2HjLSEgeVIA/viewform>

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