NWACC Advisor Establishes Scholarship After Defying the Odds with CP

NorthWest Arkansas Community College employee Sarah Beth Phillips has established a scholarship in honor of Rob Jordan, a physical therapist who played a major role in shaping Phillips’ life.

At eighteen months old, Phillips was diagnosed with Cerebral Palsy, which she now refers to as a blessing. There were only two pediatric therapists in the state of Arkansas at the time of her diagnosis, so Phillips and her family were forced to trek back and forth from Jessieville to Little Rock twice per week, a three hour round trip each time, for her therapy. That was until Jordan opened his clinic, which was only 15 minutes from her home. Phillips felt it was part of the Lord’s plan that Jordan, a former trainer for the Kansas City Chiefs, would choose Hot Springs Village to open his own clinic.

Therapy wasn’t always fun, according to Phillips, who currently works as an academic advisor at NWACC. “My parents had to bribe me with a trip to the beach to get me to go meet Rob.”

However, upon meeting Rob her attitude toward therapy instantly changed. “He saw in my eyes who I could be and what I could become,” Phillips said. “When he looked at me, he saw a person rather than being caught up in the diagnosis of Cerebral Palsy.”

The way that Jordan changed Phillips’ life inspired her to establish a $1,500 scholarship in his name to benefit a student in the physical therapist assistant program at NWACC. The Rob Jordan PTA Scholarship is the only named scholarship held by the NWACC Foundation that currently benefits the College’s PTA program.

“Not only did God give me the parents who were committed to helping me fulfill my highest potential and loved me unconditionally, He also blessed me with Rob who by profession was not obligated to love and support me as he has. This is my way of honoring someone who has had a significant impact on my life and a way to show someone else how much of an impact they can have on someone else’s life,” says Phillips.

The PTA program at NWACC is 50 credit hours worth of class time and internships spread over four semesters. Due to the strenuous nature of the course curriculum, students are not encouraged to work during their coursework. This can place a significant financial strain on many of the students.

Scholarship criteria for the Rob Jordan PTA Scholarship includes demonstrated financial need, along with letters of recommendation, a one-page essay describing interests in the field and future career goals, as well as a minimum 3.0 grade point average.
The inaugural Rob Jordan PTA Scholarship was presented to Jose “Joel” Herrera on Thursday, Oct. 21 in front of the current physical therapist assistant class. Herrera was selected from several candidates because of his response to one of the interview questions. During the scholarship interview, Herrera was asked what kind of legacy he wanted to leave at the end of his life.

Herrera replied, “I want people to know I gave myself away: my emotions, my experiences, my trials, my character not only mind but of other people I encountered and absorbed, without asking for anything in return because my reward was the chance to do so in the first place.”

Jordan is honored by the gesture of the named scholarship, but says the person who should be honored is Phillips.

“She lives every day as an example to us all that faith, determination, and love can overcome any obstacle. NWACC is fortunate to have her as an employee, and I am fortunate to have her as a friend” says Jordan.

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