

ZACHARY'S STORY

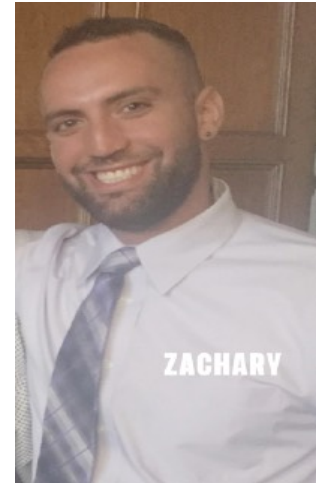
Zachary Quentin Sahouri

Sept. 26, 1993 - Dec. 23, 2021

On December 23, 2021, at 9:00 a.m., I received a phone call that left our family shattered. Zachary, our 28-year-old son, had died from an accidental overdose of cocaine/fentanyl. His two siblings, Sophia and Landon, and my husband, Raed, and I would have to learn a new way of living. But how?

School was very easy for Zach. His creativity was magical and he excelled in his academics. He enjoyed fishing and frogging as well as riding his dirtbike. He loved basketball and spent many hours in the driveway with family and friends. In high school, Zachary played basketball and ran track. He became an outstanding hurdler!

Music was a gift of Zach's. He played many instruments. When he put his mind to something, nothing stopped him. Whether he was at home jamming with his friends or at the corner karaoke bar, Zach played and sang his heart out, getting lost in the music, and forgetting the pressures and pain that come with life.



Zachary shared his love with others, even as he battled his own demons in private. He was always ready to be a listening ear or to offer sympathy and kind words when people needed them. Race, religion, wealth, and status were not important to Zach. He loved people for who they were, not what they had. He was true to his values, non-conforming, stubborn at times, eccentric in some ways, but always accepting of others, even if their beliefs and lifestyles differed from his own. He loved being around older people and found humor and delight in their quirks. Zach had two cousins with significant disabilities, one with Autism and the other with Down Syndrome. Zach never judged them, but treated them with kindness and a loving sense of humor. While Zach attended Michigan State University, he had a job working with kids and young men with disabilities, but it was more than a job—he hung out with them, shot hoops, went bowling, and did other things that friends often do together. I believe Zach was starting to realize he had a gift working with individuals with disabilities, as he was very proud and excited to have been hired by a company one week before his death. He was looking forward to starting up work in this field again.

Zachary had always been highly active and sometimes impulsive but that had been his personality since he was a toddler. His grandma used to say, "he is so precocious" as he wanted to try everything and was quite fearless. Smoking marijuana started in Zach's early teens. Although we were very concerned and would talk with him, he would deny there was a problem. His grades were top-notch, he had no attendance issues, and active in sports so it was easy to be manipulated by his words, "I don't have a problem." We wanted to believe him but knew a problem was developing. He agreed, his senior year to receive help. At the end of his first semester of senior year, he was expelled for having a small bag of weed in his car. This was pure devastation for Zach as school was important to him. He attended Michigan State University, for three years, his dream since he was a child, but dropped out his senior year. He did not leave Lansing but worked in the restaurant industry. We learned, a year before his death, that his drug use had progressed to cocaine. His lifestyle was changing and although he kept in contact with his family more than weekly, he rarely came home. The disease of addiction had become stronger than we could have ever imagined and ultimately led him to choices out of his control. Zachary never accepted that he had an addiction or needed help. He was far too proud and deemed it as a sign of weakness.

Zachary appreciated the small things in life, the gifts that many of us take for granted. He was captivated by the waves of the ocean, the beauty of a sunset, and the warmth of a bonfire. Zach didn't talk about God often, but God saw him for what he was, a beautiful boy, a beloved son, a loyal and steadfast friend, and a talented, compassionate, and sensitive young man who simply wanted to love and be loved.