

## **Gregory J. Bangay Memorial Bursary Fund to Help First Steps**

By

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Gregory Bangay was born in Saint John and grew up in Quispamsis with his parents, Donald and Brenda (Atkins) Bangay, brother Paul, along with two sisters, Dana and Lou-Anne. As the youngest of 27 grandchildren, he had a special relationship with his "Nana" and big brother Paul, with whom he shared a love of hockey, volleyball, basketball, soccer and football, as a fan and player. "My little brother was always there for me and helped me through some rough times" he notes. Fluently bilingual, Greg excelled in math and science graduating with honours from Kennebecasis Valley High School. He developed a love of music, an aptitude for guitar and keyboard, an interest in books and environmental causes. He attended the University of New Brunswick in Saint John where he became skilled in information technology. Whether it was in the call centre industry, insurance business or heavy industry, he had a strong work ethic and was a team player.

On December 30th, 2009, at the age of 31, his promising life was cut tragically short by accident. His family keenly miss his sense of humour and easy-going manner. Many of them were present June 9 to share with supporters of the Greater Saint John Community Foundation why they have chosen to remember him by doing something significant to help others and establish a permanent fund in his memory. Gregory's parents, wishing to honour their son, and to make a contribution to the community, of which they have been actively a part, established The Gregory J. Bangay Memorial Bursary Fund in December, 2010.

With little age difference, his nieces and nephews delighted in his entertaining company. Niece Rebecca says "We would talk and he was always interested in my projects. I loved him and miss him so much." Nephew Kurtis says "He was smart, very wise and a great guy". Niece Emily adds "He would make everything so much fun". Sister Lou-Anne recalls "His ability to connect to people of all ages from all walks of life was special". Sister Dana remembers "From the time he was born, it was just so easy to love him....We had a lot in common in spite of a 6 year age difference...Greg possessed wisdom and intelligence beyond his years....We always seemed to know what the other thought and what the other needed....He will forever remain my baby brother". The family dog, Bobo, was a favorite companion. His mother recalls his talents for mimicry and accents, "He enjoyed repartee with friends and family and always was up for a good discussion". Greg and his father, Don, often worked on home projects together and discussed their shared interest in Greg's long-term plans and work, particularly in heavy industry. Don says he was a person who demanded little and was satisfied living a simple life.

Well-liked, active in sports and a whiz on the computer, Greg had a close circle of friends, who have been a great source of comfort and support for the Bangays. Jonathan Gracewood, a close high school and university friend, recalls "he definitely had athletic skills....Greg was the human version of Google....the guy was so smart". Kris McIlwraith remembers his "non-judgmental ear...a great listener...he will always be with me forever." Alex Hahn comments " he was kind, quiet and trustworthy...respectful....with a sense of humour...who had many friends. Those lucky enough to know him by name will always miss him ". He maintained close contact with friends far and wide online. He was sympathetic to those down on their luck and had diverse interests.

The Bangay's wish is to contribute to the life and development of a young person through offering support with a bursary as they pursue post-secondary studies. They have selected First Steps, a residence for pregnant and parenting teens, which offers the opportunity to complete high school, as the charity and educational institution from which a graduate will be selected for the annual award of \$500. " Greg had a strong sense of social justice and felt deeply for those marginalized by poverty or circumstance" concludes his Mother. "We hope this

bursary will help a young mom and her babe to have more options in life. He always wanted to make a difference and we want to be his vehicle for change" she concluded.

The First Steps graduation is scheduled for June 23 when four young women will mark a significant milestone in their lives. What is even more remarkable is that they all plan to further their studies this fall at a post-secondary institution. Without the guidance and support they received at First Steps it is unlikely their futures would be so promising. The added responsibilities of being a mother, often on their own, take a toll on young women who try to complete their education while being pregnant and/or parenting. Sharon Amirault, Executive Director of First Steps is very excited, "grateful, honoured and proud to have our name associated with Gregory Bangay". The winner will be announced this week at their unique Graduation Celebration. "We have 4 amazing women graduating this June with two more finishing in January. This will bring our graduated to 36" she adds.

The family, friends and neighbours of the Bangays are helping increase the fund and generate more income for the bursaries over time. Brenda Bangay was delighted and surprised when she was remembered with gifts to the fund instead of a personal item for a recent birthday. On August 5 the Knights of Columbus are organizing a Golf Tournament at Rockwood Park which will benefit the new fund. Participants are welcome and can contact Kevin McDonald, 650-8116 for registration information.

*Community Profile is a weekly column highlighting community causes and work done by non-profit organizations in the Greater Saint John area. It is contributed by Jane Barry, executive director of The Greater Saint John Community Foundation. Contact the foundation at 506-672-8880, [sjfoundation@nb.aibn.com](mailto:sjfoundation@nb.aibn.com) To view other Community Profiles go to [www.saint-john-foundation.nb.ca](http://www.saint-john-foundation.nb.ca)*

Photo: The Parents of Gregory J. Bangay have established a fund in memory of their son, who had a strong sense of social justice and felt deeply for those marginalized by poverty or circumstance. They will present the first annual bursary this week to a graduate of First Steps, a residence for pregnant and parenting teens.

