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A story about Johnnie character

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Quad 136

A Story About Johnnie Character

[Previous](#) [Next](#)

A Story About Johnnie Character



One of the most enjoyable parts of any educator's job is to see the growth and development of the young people we work with. Around commencement time there are lots of nice stories about students whose lives have been changed by their education. In fact, if we do our jobs well for our students, there are almost as many of these great stories as there are students.

But occasionally there is a story that is so out of the ordinary that it deserves repeating.

The Class of 2015 at Saint John's University has suffered an unusual number of tragic losses during its four years on campus. Four young men that began with their classmates in the fall of 2011 have died

tragically while they were undergraduates.

This story is about one young man who died in an accident in the summer after his freshman year.

Every spring Saint John's University hosts an event known as Mom Prom. It is sponsored by the Knights of Columbus chapter on campus, and graduating seniors are invited to bring their mothers to campus for a dinner and dance in Guild Hall—a senior prom. This event has been so wildly successful that attendance has had to be limited to seniors only due to space considerations. Multiple moms have told me how much they love this event, to the extent I have even wondered if we have enrolled some students whose mothers pushed SJU during the admissions process so they could go to Mom Prom!

Johnnies often go in groups, as they have gotten to know each other's parents during their four years in Collegeville. This spring, as they were planning for Mom Prom, the friends of the student who died after his freshman year recalled that this young man had expressed a wish to take his mom to this event. The young man knew all about Mom Prom even as a freshman because his older brother was a Johnnie and had taken their mother previously. To honor this young man, their friendship and his mother, this group invited the mother to go to Mom Prom with them this year. So in the midst of a busy senior spring—with



classes, job searches and all the other senior year activities—these young men generously remembered their friend and his mother.

She was deeply touched by the gesture and, despite what was surely a bittersweet return to Saint John's, she had a wonderful time with her son's friends and their mothers. She said, "These are the caliber of young men you are graduating from Saint John's."

I don't know how much credit Saint John's can take for the kind and thoughtful character of these young men. I suspect their families might have had a little to do with it, but we are certainly proud to call them Johnnies

We will proudly grant them their degrees this weekend at commencement as we also remember their friends and classmates who will not be with us.

By [Michael Hemesath](#) | May 9th, 2015 | Categories: [Kudos](#) | [0 Comments](#)

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Michael Hemesath is the 13th president of Saint John's University. A 1981 SJU graduate, Hemesath is the first layperson appointed to a full presidential term at SJU. You can find him on Twitter [at] [PrezHemesath](#).