



LIVE LIKE SAM

A legacy of love

WORDS Ashley Brown

IMAGES Deborah DeKoff and courtesy Ron Jackenthal

Sam Jackenthal's international inline skating victories and U.S. Junior Freestyle Champion title are great achievements, but more impressive than his exceptional athletic accomplishments are his character and his exuberant love of life. Ron Jackenthal, Sam's father, says, "Sam lived more in 16 years than most people have or ever will in their lifetime."

Sam physically left the world in 2015, after a tragic ski training accident in Australia; however, his legacy of love gains momentum every day. Ron illustrates how Sam inspired others, "He was about cheering on everybody to live a big, full, and inspired life. It is often said that Sam is Park City's kid."

In the years leading up to the official launch of the Live Like Sam Foundation in 2019, Ron witnessed "An infectious and nondissipating love that stuck around for Sam." He realized that people are still connected to his son. Ron explains, "Live Like Sam was born out of living, not out of loss." Skylar Jackenthal, Sam's younger sister and co-founder of the Live Like Sam Foundation, reflects, "There was a need for some sort of positivity in the kids' lives of the community, and that is where Live Like Sam came from."

Sam's exceptional personality opened the door for true excellence in life, and Ron saw the need for Sam's positive and healthy attributes in the lives of local kids. Inspired, Ron left his career as an executive in technology and approached prospective partners with a simple concept: "We are going to create

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— RON JACKENTHAL

something that stands for positivity and kindness... We are going to do good in the community. We are going to make an impact.”

Today, the Live Like Sam Foundation promotes positivity in local youth by providing them with tools for growth and by fostering a strong and positive sense of self, purpose, character, and community. Foremost, the foundation encourages individuals to model their lives around the traits that defined Sam's life: positivity, gratitude, kindness, empathy, inclusiveness, discipline, and determination.

The acronym CARE is the foundation's guiding principle and stands for Community, Athletics, Responsibility, and Education. The foundation partners with like-minded organizations to generate opportunities for youth to volunteer and serve. Community is an essential pillar of the Live Like Sam Foundation, and Ron says, “Sam reminds our community that we are a community.”

Sam exemplified these principals when he skied and skated. His courageous athletic pursuits were an essential component of his individuality, and Sam's peers and friends follow his tradition of courage and enthusiasm when they bravely “go big” and have fun doing it — they “Just Jackenthal It.”

“Sam felt the calling to lean into fear... he was wired differently,” recalls Ron. Skylar explains, “For me, living like Sam is taking risks and getting way out of my comfort zone.”

The Live Like Sam Foundation, along with its partners, help youth access the resources they need to become socially, emotionally, and mentally fit for life. The foundation's curriculum educates youth to be positive community members and teaches empathy, gratitude, sportsmanship, and leadership.

Since the launch of the Live Like Sam Foundation, the organization has raised over \$200,000, impacted more than 200 youth, and created numerous unique scholarship programs, like awards available to youth who live an exemplary life.

“Live Like Sam stands for many different things... If you ask me, our foundation was created with the sole goal of motivating youth to be better people,” says Skylar.

With the changes brought about in 2020, the foundation amplified their focus on youth mental wellness and fitness.

“Before COVID, addiction, isolation, depression, and anxiety were through the roof. Now, with COVID, they are up 20-30 percent, and we have some big





problems,” says Ron. He believes, “One of the ways we [Live Like Sam Foundation] are in a position to help is to make an impact on this severe youth mental wellness epidemic.”

October 10, 2020, marked the second annual Live Like Sam Day, a day when people from across the country practice self-compassion and commit random acts of kindness for others. The Live Like Sam Day fundraiser is a tangible expression of generosity that Sam’s legacy provokes. Organizations, companies, and members of the community donate items for auction and funds raised go toward Live Like Sam scholarships. In the spirit of supporting community, Live Like Sam even tried raising funds for other youth-based nonprofits like SOS Outreach and Big Brothers Big Sisters.

Physical reminders of Sam’s spirit live on in the Park City community. Park City Mountain Resort has five park features in honor of Sam. The rails are painted blue and don Sam’s gold handprint and the “I Ride For Sam” slogan. Standing alone or combined, the five rails are impressive features and examples of how Sam continues to inspire athletes to “Just Jackenthal It.”

The “Sam Bench” at the Rob’s Trail viewpoint is surrounded by wind chimes, a plaque, and Sam’s ski gear. The bench is a place of reflection and self-care with a nourishing panoramic of Murdock Peak and Super Condor ski runs. There is also a graffiti art tunnel at Kimball Junction, under Highway 224, and a special wind feature at The Winter Sports School that both honor Sam.

The world needs Sam’s legacy of love now more than ever.

As his sister, Skylar champions Sam’s values. “He made everyone feel like a friend. Sam lived every day as if it were his last, and he encouraged everyone else to do the same. He is the definition of a fearless leader.” Ron, notes that “If more people were touched with kindness, gratitude, empathy, and the things we stand for, the world would be a better place. If we start to learn to love ourselves, it will help us to love each other.”

Sam’s inspiration is thriving and infectious. Ron sums up his outlook and, in turn, illuminates a simple perspective we all can adopt: “Sam always aimed for the podium, but his life wasn’t just about the podium. It was about community, kindness, and living a life filled with love for himself and others.” ■