

Selfless acts made Ryan Todisco super

When Ryan Todisco was about four years old, his mom gave him a pair of Superman pajamas. He loved them so much that he wouldn't give them up. Even though Mom promised him a new pair.

"First, the legs came to here," Cherri Todisco says, pointing to her ankles. "Then they were here and here," she



R. Todisco

says, showing how the PJs moved up his leg as he grew. "When I'd have friends over, Ryan would come into the room with a jacket on over his shirt and wearing glasses, and he'd say, 'Hello ladies. How are you? My name is Clark.'"

Then someone would pretend to be in distress and Ryan would reappear as Superman, "with clothes stuffed into his pajamas to look like muscles," Cherri says.

As a boy, Superman was his hero. Ryan didn't have super powers, but he did have a lifelong desire to help those in need.

Ryan Todisco, 21, of Rochester, died Saturday, six days after he stopped his car to help an accident victim and was then struck by another passing car. He and his dad, Ron McLean, were on their way to install carpeting in Webster on Nov. 30 when they saw a woman



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lose control of her vehicle near the interchange of routes 590 and 104. She slid off the road and hit the guardrail.

Ryan pulled over and ran to assist the woman. The driver was unhurt, but Ryan persuaded her to get out of her vehicle and safely off the road. He was then struck by another car, which continued on to hit the driver's side door of the vehicle lodged against the guardrail. Fortunately, Ryan had persuaded the driver to leave the car.

Ryan Todisco sustained bruises to his internal organs, but it was severe head trauma that led to his death Saturday at Strong Memorial Hospital.

Cherri, who lives in Greece, spoke to Ryan just before he left on Sunday. "He was going to hurry back to help decorate the tree," she says. The family visited relatives on Thanksgiving, so "I made turkey for Sunday. He couldn't wait to get back and have the drumsticks."

The tree sits undecorated, just as it was on that Sunday. The ornaments will wait until after Ryan's

funeral today at 11 a.m. at Bartolomeo & Perotto Funeral Home, 1411 Vintage Lane, Greece.

Ryan was a 2005 graduate of Greece Arcadia High School, where he played football and ran track, says Cherri. He joined the U.S. Army in 2006, and Pfc. Todisco served as an MP in Stuttgart, Germany, until he received an honorable medical discharge in July of this year because of a shoulder injury.

"Every time I'd send him a care package," Cherri says, "he'd say, 'Mom, be sure there's enough for everybody.'" It was that way with her son, she says. "People may wonder why he'd stop at that accident. Because he's Ryan," she says.

He joined the Army, Cherri says, "because he said he wanted to make himself a better person and serve his country."

Ryan was always full of life, full of laughter and great fun to be around, his mom says. "He was a ladies man," she says. Even when he was in high school, there were always girls around. Ironically, Ryan appeared in a photo in *Insider*, a *Democrat and Chronicle* publication, on Nov. 22, just eight days before his accident. In the photo, he is grinning, holding a pool stick as two young women kiss him on either cheek in a South Wedge bar.

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MARK HARE COLUMN: A TRUE 'SUPERMAN'



FAMILY REMEMBERS HERO WHO LOST LIFE SAVING ANOTHER | IN LOCAL

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His fun side drew people to him, Cherri recalls, as the memories of good times keep the tears at bay for the moment. He was always a ham at Halloween — this year sporting an elaborate pirate costume. He and his older brother Joe memorized Chevy Chase's rants from the 1989 film *Christmas Vacation* so they could use them at parties.

Ryan and some of his friends formed a pop music band after high school, and Ryan tried his hand at songwriting. "He wanted to be a singer," Cherri says, describing the tattoo he had on his arm — a heart with a microphone extending out of it, the cord trailing off toward a vein. "He'd say he had music in his blood."

His grandfather is a Buffalo Bills fan, but Ryan loved the Green Bay Packers and would wear his Packers jersey to Bills games, just for fun.

He'd go to Taco Bell at the drop of a hat, Cherri says. "He was obsessed with Taco Bell and it's probably my fault. I worked there when I was pregnant with him and whenever there was a mistake with an order, I'd get to eat the food. It



File photo 2008

Ryan Todisco, center, was a fun-loving guy who just weeks ago hammed it up with Erin Corey, left, and Meaghan Corey at a South Wedge bar. Todisco died Saturday at Strong Memorial Hospital.

must have gone right to his veins," she says with big smile.

It is the little things, all those seemingly unimportant silly gestures and words that mean so much because they are the wallpaper of our lives. It is in the ordinary, loving exchanges with friends and family — the sentences we complete for each other, the stories we recall from a single word, the favorite meals shared and movies watched again and again — that we plant the seeds of love.

Ryan Todisco didn't live long enough to even figure out what

he wanted to do or could do with his life. But all those good times, all those laughs, all that love made him the person he was when he jumped from his car two Sundays ago — a person who did not hesitate to put himself at risk for someone he did not know.

That doesn't happen by accident. It happens only after a lifetime of choosing to put others first.

In their grief, Cherri Todisco, and all of Ryan's family and friends, have good reason to be proud of the man he was. □





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WILL YURMAN staff photographer

Cherri Todisco and her son, Joseph, 24, had planned to decorate their Christmas tree on Nov. 30 at their Greece home but it will remain bare until after the funeral of Ryan Todisco, Cherri's son and Joe's brother.