

# DONOR STORIES

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## AARON WERNIMONT

### “Aaron Wernimont Scholarship Fund”

The Aaron Wernimont Scholarship Fund was established in memory of Aaron Wernimont, once a three-time all-American wrestler at Wartburg College and native of northwest Iowa.

Aaron Wernimont was born on October 20, 1985, to Dan and Leah Wernimont. He had two brothers, Nick and Chris, and two sisters, Tasha and Carley. The family lived in Pocahontas, Iowa, and Aaron and his siblings attended Pocahontas Area Community High School where they were each recognized for their notable extracurricular achievements; the girls of the family were outstanding dancers, while the boys were each exceptional wrestlers and respected football players. Nick was a distinguished wrestler, and Chris was a football running back and the school's first state wrestling champion, but Aaron soon one-upped them by playing quarterback for the football team and placing in the top four of Iowa's Class 1A State Wrestling Tournament for all four years of his high school career, including first place in his junior year. Following his victories, though, he wanted no extra recognition at school—he just wanted to be treated like everyone else.

He wasn't solely limited to athletic ability. He was also a top student in high school, and his friends remember him to be the first person to help other students and athletes who needed a hand with schoolwork or sports. They knew him to be a friend to everyone.

Aaron's wrestling and academic achievements led him to be recruited by West Point Military Academy after graduating from high school in 2004. He attended West Point for a year and a half before deciding to return to Iowa to attend Wartburg College in Waverly. He continued wrestling for the college, where he was named as an NCAA All-American three times and won two NCAA Division III national championships in 2008 and 2009 during his 80-match winning streak through the end of his career. Off the mat, he was also a three-time National Wrestling Coaches Association Academic All-American. He graduated from Wartburg in 2009.

Beyond athletics and academics, Aaron also found his future wife, volleyball star Kahri Heinemann, at Wartburg. They were married in the Wartburg Chapel on August 20, 2011, after his first year of optometry school at Indiana University in Bloomington, Indiana.

Just seven months later, however, Kahri heard him breathing loudly in his sleep; she tried to wake him, but couldn't. He passed away on the way to the hospital on March 13, 2012. The cause of death was not confirmed and is still unknown.

Aaron was known by his friends and family for his friendly and outgoing personality in addition to his many achievements during his 26 years of life. Friends of Aaron decided to establish a scholarship fund to continue his legacy of exemplary leadership by helping a graduating senior attend college through financial assistance. With the scholarship in his name, Aaron will continue to impact people positively far beyond his lifetime.



KAHRI & AARON WERNIMONT