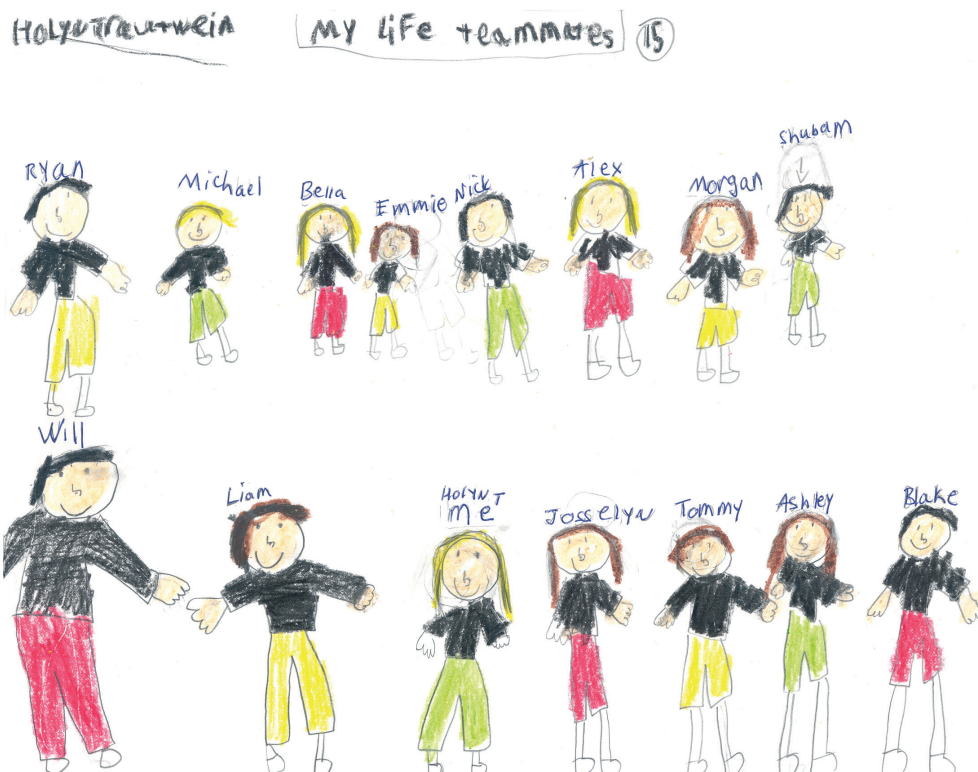


A WILL TO LIVE

BY JOHN TRAUTWEIN
DRAWING BY HOLYN TRAUTWEIN



Love, hope, and a will to live! Every parent strives hard to instill these three very important ingredients into the minds and hearts of their children. In October of last year, our family suffered the most tragic loss imaginable, the death of our son, Richard Williams "Will" Trautwein. At 15-years-old, Will was unable to see the love and hope that surrounded him, and his will to live disappeared. Whether it disappeared for a long time, or for a moment, does not matter, the fact is that it disappeared, and a family and a community were left to pick up the "light" that once shown so brightly in Will.

Since that dreadful day in October, we have survived one day at a time, carried by our faith, our family and a complete submersion in love from our friends that has been nothing short of miraculous.

As a result, the Will to Live Foundation, Inc. was formed. Our mission, quite simply is:

“To create a non-profit foundation that is dedicated to improving the lives and the ‘Will to Live’ of teenagers everywhere. Through education, motivation, consultation, charity, support and most importantly, love and fellowship, we will work for and through these young adults to help them always find the ‘Good’ in life and a ‘Will to live’ through all of life’s trials.”

Will Trautwein was a young man who truly loved his friends. A “win” for Will was friendship. We have learned from his friends that he never had a bad thing to say about anyone, and he embraced everyone for exactly who they were. He loved them, and he made sure they knew it. His family takes comfort in knowing that if he were here today, he would be demanding a leading role in this foundation, and this gives us strength.

THE CLARENCE EFFECT

The first event for the foundation was in December of 2010. The girl’s lacrosse team at Northview High School organized a charity fundraiser showing of *It’s a Wonderful Life*. At a Fellowship of Christian Athletes meeting just four weeks before, I was asked to speak to a small section of the Northview High student body. With my wife at my side, we delivered a message that was simple: “Love each other, be there for each other, but most importantly, talk to each other. Help each other find the good in life!” We introduced “The Clarence Effect” by challenging the kids to be more like Clarence in *It’s a Wonderful Life*—that friend who helps another find the good in life, even at the worst of times. “Who’s your Clarence?” we asked. “This holiday tell them!”

After the viewing of this classic movie, the Facebook

posts and the emails and “Clarence” references were everywhere. We so much enjoyed watching and listening to these high school students talking about Clarence and being that “guardian angel” for each other and realizing that we all need a Clarence or two—“Life Teammates” to help find the good in life’s difficult times.

MY LIFE TEAMMATES

“The human spirit craves companionship.” A good friend and life teammate of mine, Brian Holman (ex-Major league pitcher) said this to me not long after my son passed. He wanted to make sure I was seeking companionship to help me through this most difficult time. Brian embodies the perfect definition of what we at the foundation term a “Life Teammate.” A friend who I shared a dream with, along with joy, success and failures almost 25 years ago (when I was one of these young adults). Yet now, Brian is still there for me, and he was letting me know it—and he is one of many.

My wife Susie and I were both athletes for so much of our lives and have always been part of a team in one way, shape or form. We developed such strong bonds with these friends who we now consider “Life Teammates.” Our children are developing these bonds now, and with the pressures on young adults in today’s world, they are needed more than ever before.

H.E. Luccock once said: “No one can whistle a symphony. It takes an orchestra to play it.” Well,



Will Trautwein



Tommy, Susie, Will, Holyn, John & Michael Trautwein (May 2010)

the Will to Live Foundation believes that “Life is a Symphony” and it sounds so much better when you share it with friends who you love!

help finance the suicide prevention and counseling experts in our communities. We want to fund teen suicide awareness events, and we want to fund various scholarships to young adults as well. But the true goal is to help create a stronger “Will to Live” in our teen communities.

In February, in a small town in New Hampshire, a 13-year-old girl named Emma, who discovered the “Will To Live Group” on Facebook, created a “Teen Suicide Awareness” month at her middle school in North Andover MA. They are giving motivational music CDs for donations, selling Will to Live bracelets, holding bake sales, and giving away teen

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John Trautwein

My six-year-old daughter Holyn recently drew for me a lovely picture of her “Life Teammates”—those people in her life that she would want to help and those people she would turn to for help. Later that night at dinner, she and her brothers discussed the drawing, and it was a wonderful moment. We then asked, “Do they know they are your ‘Life Teammates?’”—Holyn could not answer. “Wouldn’t they feel wonderful, Holyn, knowing that you considered them a ‘Life Teammate?’”

RAISING AWARENESS

The foundation is not about raising money. Yes, we will raise money so we can make donations to

suicide awareness pamphlets. They may raise \$200, but more importantly, the kids of that community will have worked together forming life bonds while educating themselves, their classmates, and their community of the teen suicide epidemic and the need for all of us to work together to create that life symphony—that “Will to Live.”



For more information on the Will to Live Foundation, visit: www.will-to-live.org. You may contact both John and Susie Trautwein at: friends@will-to-live.org.