

Mother Remembers Son by Helping Others

*Ryan Odelle Mance Foundation
Provides Scholarships to Students*

By Stacy M. Brown
WI Contributing Writer

There are no words to describe the pain that a parent experiences when they lose a child – especially to a senseless crime.

A mother's agony is the most unbearable of all. As she watches the coffin close – there's a sense of finality – and grief that's unimaginable.

Patricia Daniels, a Prince George's County resident, experienced those feelings and more when she returned home one frigid November night in 1999, only to find her 21-year-old son's lifeless body lying just inside the threshold of her front door.

"Every time I walked through that door, I re-lived finding my son. I went through my grief and I went through my pain," she said.

After police arrived at Daniels' home in Laurel, Md., they obtained DNA samples and later discovered a photo of a man who attempted to use her son, Ryan Mance's bank card at a local ATM machine.

"No one was ever convicted for Ryan's death. Police have told me what they think happened, that he brought someone home with him from a nightclub because he was such a social butterfly," Daniels said.

"No one knows why the person killed him. The house was

ransacked and the only thing of value the person took was Ryan's beloved saxophone."

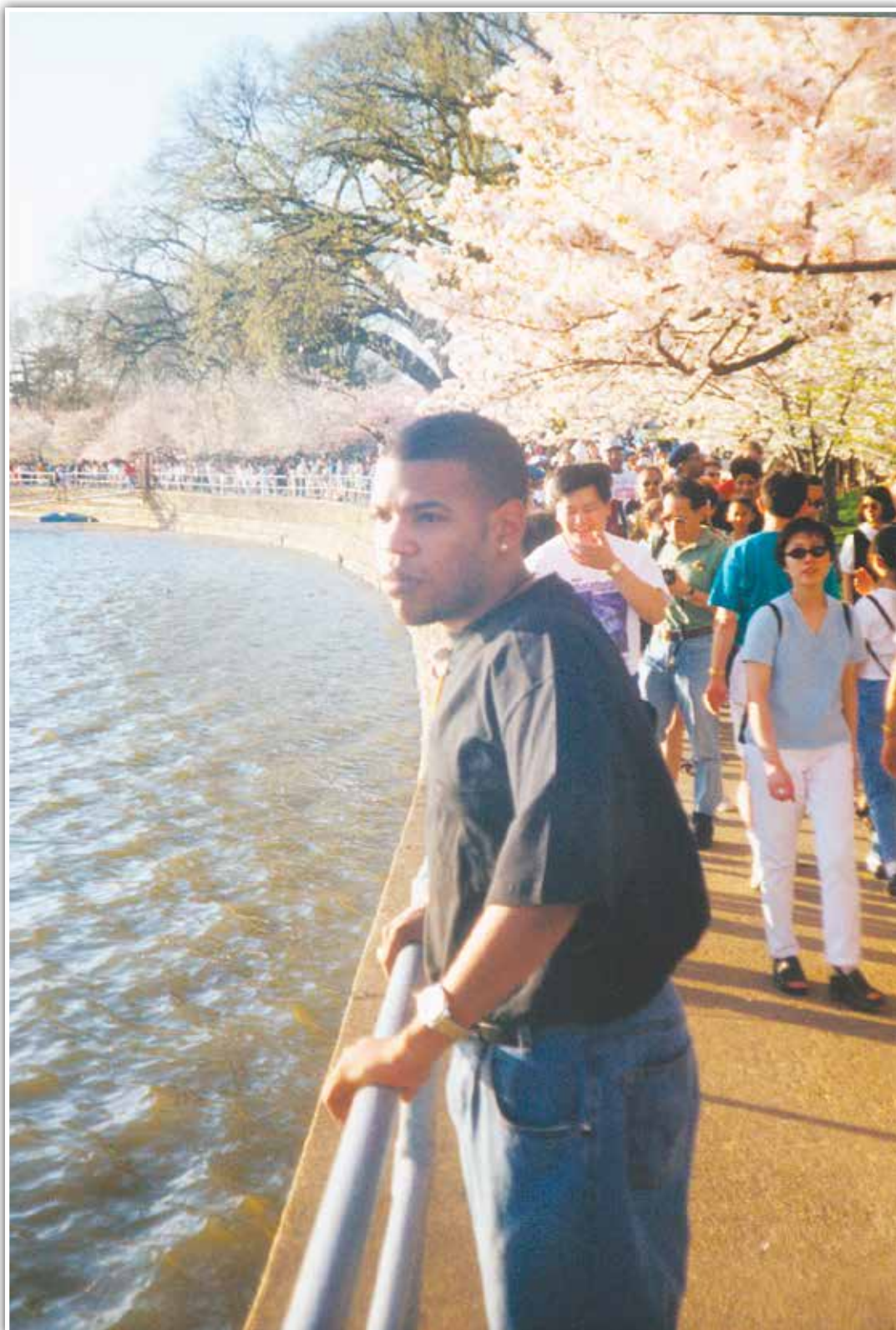
That saxophone represents the official insignia of Daniels' charitable organization, the Ryan Odelle Mance Memorial Scholarship Foundation, Inc., which began in 2008, intent on awarding scholarships to area African-American male students.

"I guess, I was like most parents in that I wanted my sons to have an appreciation of the arts, especially music," Daniels said. "I think he wanted to please me. He chose the saxophone as his musical instrument and he came to love it."

Her son performed in the Eisenhower Middle School and Laurel High School bands, both located in Laurel, Md. He earned first chair in Laurel High School's band. Mance received numerous accolades, including several medals from the Maryland Band Director's Association Ensemble. He particularly enjoyed the 1990 Spike Lee film, "Mo' Better Blues," which featured the music of jazz musicians Terence Blanchard and Branford Marsalis, who plays soprano, alto and tenor saxophone. "Ryan really loved the music in that movie," Daniels said.

Sadly, it wasn't until after the aspiring saxophonist's death that

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The late Ryan Mance, an aspiring musician, gazes upon the water from the Tidal Basin in Washington, D.C., during the annual Cherry Blossom Festival in 1999. /Courtesy Photo



Patricia Daniels, the mother of slain musician, Ryan Mance, wants to help other young black men achieve their dreams. The Ryan Odelle Mance Memorial Scholarship Foundation, Inc., awards scholarships to deserving African-American males. Mrs. Daniels beams during the 5th Annual Evening of Jazz and Awards Dinner Benefit at Camelot by Martin's in Upper Marlboro, Md., on July 20. /Photo by Khalid Naji-Allah

"Giving voice to what you're feeling is part of the healing."

- Susan L. Taylor
Editor in Chief, Inertia, Emma Magazine

It's time for us to stand up and confront the issue of mental health problems in our community. Go to strokesthatheal.samhsa.gov for more information about mental health problems, and to hear the rest of Susan's story.

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Roderick Mance, Ryan's older brother, designed the insignia for the Ryan Odelle Mance Memorial Scholarship Foundation, Inc., to honor his younger brother as both a scholar and a musician. /Photo courtesy of Roderick Mance

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Daniels learned her son received a full four-year music scholarship to Bowie State University in Bowie, Md.

"Ryan loved people, he loved life, music and he loved blowing his saxophone," Daniels recounted. "He had no idea that his brother, Roderick, would eventually design the logo and tag line of the saxophone player in a silhouette to help brand an organization that would be created in his memory," she said.

During the search for Mance's killer, Daniels, established a reward fund, offering \$10,000 for information leading to the arrest and conviction of the perpetrator.

An anonymous donor contributed another \$5,000 and, after nearly a decade, she closed the reward fund and began looking for other ways to honor her son's memory.

That's when she decided to start a scholarship fund.

Today, more than a dozen scholarships have been awarded since 2008 to qualified students in Mance's memory and Daniels said many more will result from the efforts of the foundation, which raises money by hosting various events throughout Prince George's County.

"I give Pat Daniels a lot of credit because she has a vision for young males, and she's doing

something about it," said Barbara Jolly, a close friend of Daniels. "She's not one for lip service," Jolly said.

On July 20, Daniels hosted the 5th annual Evening of Jazz and Awards Dinner Benefit for the foundation in Upper Marlboro, Md.

Stephen Trimmell, a St. Mary's College of Maryland student in St. Mary's City, Md., and foundation award recipient, said the scholarship proved to be a wonderful gift.

"The Mance Scholarship has been nothing less than a blessing. The open support I have received from the foundation board, distinguishes this scholarship from any other," said Trimmell, 19, who has yet to declare a major.

Mance's older brother, Roderick, said he's helping to carry on his late brother's legacy by assisting with the foundation. Education is the key to success, said Mance, 40. "My education has meant the world to me, and it has opened a lot of doors. I really want to share that with others," he said. A training and employee development specialist at the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Virtual University in Southwest, Mance's thirst for education and knowledge resulted from his younger brother's untimely death.

He earned a Master of Education degree from George Washington University and a bachelor's of science degree in

management studies from the University of Maryland at College Park.

Daniels said, while she misses her son's smile and youthful exuberance, there's joy in being able to help other students.

She wants the foundation to become a leading nonprofit organization in providing adequate financial assistance to help young African Americans succeed in reaching their academic goals.

Ryan Mance was born on Aug. 22, 1978.

As a toddler, Daniels said, he rarely cried or demanded attention.

"Even when his asthma bothered him, he would say he felt fine," she said.

While attending Laurel High School, Mance was a straight "A" student and a stand-out saxophonist in the school's marching band. Upon graduation, he entered the University of Maryland at Baltimore, where he studied system analysis.

Mance's high school teachers remembered a brilliant and selfless person.

"Having spent a delightful school year with Rod, I was thrilled years later when Ryan came into the same classroom. When Ryan came down the hall, visiting with everyone, smiled his wondrous smile at me, then entered our room, life began," said Linda Kinsley, one of Mance's former English teachers.

"What a joy. He was so open to everyone and empathetic to his classmates, whether their needs were personal or academic. He made the positive difference everyday for everyone he encountered. Ryan was a delightful, multi-talented, scholarly gentleman," she said.

The Ryan Odelle Mance Foundation depends upon the support of individuals to carry out its mission of assisting and increasing access to higher education for deserving, talented and qualified black male students, Daniels said.

"You have the power to help change a life," she said. "Ryan's murder is teaching me as much about life as it did about indescribable pain. So, more than anything, I want Ryan's spirit to make a difference in someone else's life."**WI**

For further information regarding the Ryan Odelle Mance Memorial Scholarship Foundation, Inc., visit www.ryanomancefoundation.org.

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