



THE BRIDGE

A NEWSLETTER FOR THE DAKOTA LEO JAMES FOUNDATION

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Dakota's Story



Dakota L. James, 23, was originally from the Frederick, MD area. He graduated from West Virginia University in May 2015 and a few months later he moved to Pittsburgh to attend the MBA program at Duquesne University. Dakota loved Pittsburgh - a place he knew very well from his many visits while attending concerts, sporting events, and visiting extended family. As with everything he did, he dove right in. He would walk or ride his bike to school and work so he could see the city up close.

On January 25, 2017, Dakota left work for an evening out with coworkers. Later that evening, he was last seen walking through Katz Plaza onto Scotts Place apparently headed toward the Roberto Clemente Bridge - his most direct route home. What we will never know is whether he got to that bridge or if he walked across it. A surveillance camera at the end of the Scotts Place alley was not working and there are no pedestrian cameras on the bridge - despite the high number of people walking across the bridge each day. One or two cameras could have solved or prevented this most painful of mysteries.



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A Foundation Is Born

There were so many things in question during the time that Dakota went missing. The family felt unsupported, left only to forge their own way. The answer to this tragedy was to find ways to help others in missing cases—a foundation is born.

www.wpxi.com/news/dakota-james-family-announcing-creation-of-foundation/536825706

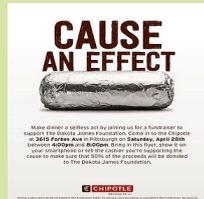


"We can't go back from what already happened, all we can do is move forward and make it safer for someone else."

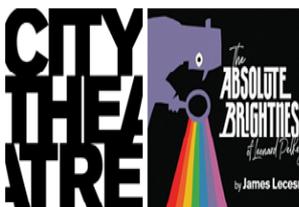
-Pam James

The Dakota James Foundation makes its inaugural fundraising appearance at Pittsburgh Pridefest last June, 2017. This event brokered several potential partnerships with other organizations.

Success Stories



The Dakota Leo James Foundation has had a busy first-year of fundraising and building partnerships toward meeting it's goals to improve safety and raise awareness. It hosted dinners at **Texas Roadhouse**, **Uno's** and **Chipotle** restaurants, both in Pittsburgh and Frederick, where percentages of service were donated and foundation members held raffles and silent auctions.



Partnered with Pittsburgh's City Theatre in the **Absolute Brightness** production to raise monies and awareness with an open forum on missing person protocols.

Raised awareness at events in Frederick, the **Asian Health Fair** and **Hood College**, where foundation members processed fingerprinting kits for local children and fostered partnerships toward future projects.



Junior foundation members, Emily and Jake, founded the **Blessings Bag Project**, derived from hearing stories of how helpful the Pittsburgh homeless community was to the family during the searches for Dakota. They raised money and gathered donations for the bags to include water, snacks, toiletries, raincoats, and clothes and distributed them in Pittsburgh last December.

This Spring, a partnership with **Pittsburgh's District Attorney, Stephen Zappala, Jr.**, was formed-creating an advocate position to assist families in missing persons cases. To read letter, click here: <https://bit.ly/2u52u5n>

Zappala, alongside the Dakota James Foundation, and other partners have successfully placed cameras on the South Side of Pittsburgh. To read more: <https://bit.ly/2tRI804>

Another project has been started in the Oakland area, more information will be shared soon.

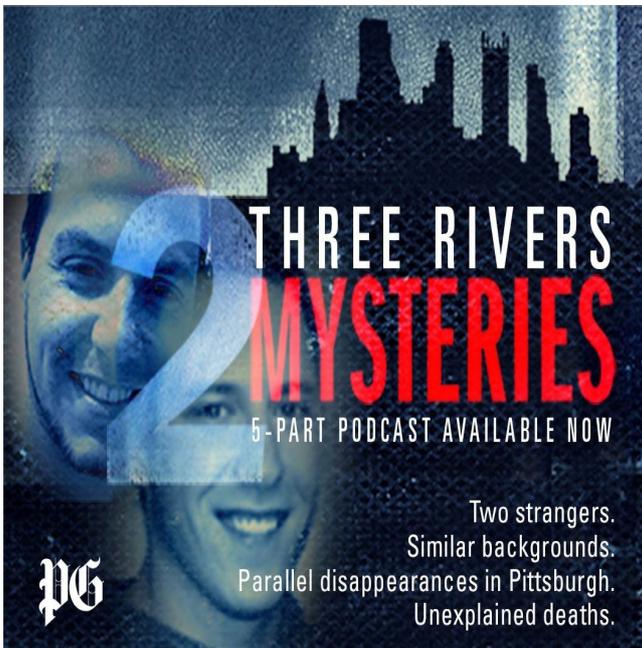


The Foundation's **First Annual Golf Tournament**, held on June 1 at Rattlewood Golf Course in Mt. Airy, MD, drew over 80 golfers and raised nearly \$10,000.

In June 2018, the foundation made appearances at both **Pittsburgh and Frederick's Pride** events—raising money and awareness. Foundation members collected donations, held a raffle and sold merchandise where panic-alarms lead in sales.



Pittsburgh Post-Gazette Podcast Series



LISTEN: “Three Rivers, Two Mysteries,” the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette’s first serialized podcast, deals with the disappearances and deaths of Paul Kochu and Dakota James that are detailed in this news story. Michael A. Fuoco is the host and Ashley Murray is the producer of the five-chapter podcast. Download it from iTunes, Google Play, Stitcher and other sites. For photos, videos and more, go to <https://newsinteractive.post-gazette.com/threeriverstwomysteries/>

READ: Michael A. Fuoco’s newspaper article: Mysteries remain in Pittsburgh as anniversaries of the disappearances and deaths of two young men approach.

<http://www.post-gazette.com/local/city/2017/11/21/Pittsburgh-missing-serial-killer-smiley-face-killer-paul-kochu-dakota-james-three-rivers-two-mysteries-cyril-wecht-police-stephen-zappala-jr-district-attorney-podcast/stories/201711160174>



“I am very honored and humbled to receive this award with Ashley Murray on behalf of the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette.”

-Michael A. Fuoco



On June 8, 2018, held at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C., the Digital Audio Award honored Michael A. Fuoco and Ashley Murray with a national **Sigma Delta Chi** Award for Excellence for their work on “Three Rivers, Two Mysteries,” the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette’s first serialized podcast. <http://www.post-gazette.com/local/city/2018/04/23/Post-Gazette-podcast-wins-national-award/stories/201804230124>

Future Events

- **Rock Bottom Brewery**, July 19, 2018
- **Leaves and Lager**, October 12, 2018
- **Pittsburgh 5K and Dinner**, April 27, 2019
- **2nd Annual Dakota James Golf Tournament**, May 31, 2019
- **Mt. Airy Chili Cookoff**, May 2019
- **Pittsburgh Pride**, June 2019
- **Frederick Pride**, June 2019



Dinner Date with the Dakota James Foundation
171 E Bridge Street Homestead, PA 15120 / 412-462-2739
www.rockbottom.com
More Information Soon



For ticket information:
www.mdtx.com/leavesandlager.html

Foundation Information

For more information on missing persons, safety, awareness, or support—please visit our website at:



#Dakota Moments



Dakota always loved to travel and envisioned his adult-life spent jet-setting the country and globe. **#Dakota Moments** was born. As a tribute to him—family and friends traveled with him, in spirit, from lakes in Maryland to Pennsylvania, New York New Hampshire, Arizona, California, Virginia and to Mount Fuji in Japan. We love him so hard!

