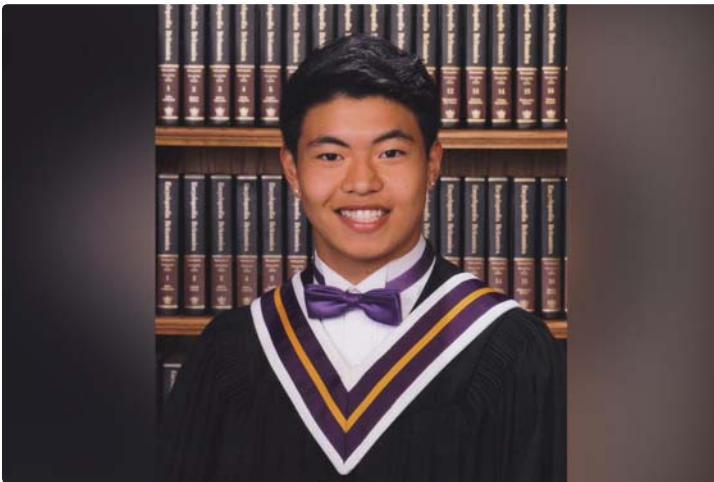


# New foundation honours legacy of former VC athlete

BY **AGNIESZKA KRAWCZYNSKI**

SHARE

TWEET



Kristian Domingo, who died of cancer in 2016, smiles in his 2014 graduation photo from Vancouver College. The Kristian Domingo Foundation was set up in his name. (Photo courtesy of the Domingo family)

VANCOUVER—A new foundation that helps young people facing adversity is also honouring a son who died too soon.

“He was always hopeful and faithful,” said Teresa Domingo of her son, Kristian, who died of cancer last year at the age of 20.

Kristian was a Vancouver College graduate with a football scholarship at the University of Saskatchewan and dreams of becoming a veterinarian when he was diagnosed with a rare pediatric cancer. He was 18 when he first underwent chemotherapy and radiation.

At Easter 2015, tests showed no signs of cancer, but when he suffered back and neck pain that fall, doctors discovered the cancer had returned. Kristian spent his final Christmas and his 20th birthday with his family and high school sweetheart Bailey Dagg before he died August 16, 2016.

“He was popular, an athletic jock kind of guy, but his personality did not meet that norm. He would help those that needed help. He was a football player that sang in the choir,” said Teresa. Kristian also befriended younger students, including a boy with developmental disabilities.

Kristian was a “lightbulb,” according to Vancouver College’s assistant principal Robert Kozikowski. “He was not only happy with who he was, he was willing to exude joy to others.”

Kristian was no stranger to adversity. A few years before he was diagnosed with cancer for the first time, he faced a serious knee injury that had him in surgery and sitting on the bench during basketball and football games in Grade 10.

“His team was very talented and had not lost a game as a group in three years. We were losing our first game and the team was crumbling under the pressure. Kristian was four

days away from surgery to repair his knee injury. He saw his team struggling and begged to be put in,” said his basketball coach and science teacher Mer Marghetti.

“I kept saying no. Finally in the second half, I allowed him to play for two minutes, and begged him not to push himself and get hurt. In the two minutes on the court he did what no other player could accomplish. He brought a true fight. He brought intensity, yet he also brought calm. He showed his teammates that playing with heart and together can conquer anything.”



Kristian Domingo played football for VC in 2015.



Kristian seen in 2015.

Kristian's example set the stage for the rest of the reason, said Marghetti. That strength of character also shone through his cancer diagnosis. "Kristian is hands down the definition of inspiration."

Football coach Todd Bernett remembers Kristian's "character, grit, and toughness."

The **Kristian Domingo Foundation** was set up in his name and offers a \$1,100 annual scholarship to a graduating student at Vancouver College who has overcome personal

adversity. His mom said the foundation was also set up to advocate for people like her son who fall into a gap while undergoing treatment.

“When Kristian was ill, he was 18 years old and he was being helped at the BC Cancer Agency being treated with 60, 70, and 80 year olds. When he was in Canuck place, he was with young children,” she said. Kristian felt displaced in either group.

“There is a gap in the 15-28 year olds where there isn’t enough support,” Teresa said. “They’re going to school, they’re working, and they’re doing all those things that are very different from a 5-year-old or a 75-year-old.”

She hopes the foundation, launched this August, will be able to support initiatives that reach out to people her son’s age facing adversity and illness.

Kristian’s basketball coach believes it’s a fitting tribute. “If he had survived the cancer, he would have likely started the foundation himself,” said Marghetti.

“He valued the idea of ‘sticking up for the underdog’ and was always generous to those in need. He always placed others needs in front of his own. Even in his sickness, he worried more about how those around him were feeling.”