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Conference Room posthumously dedicated to 'IT whiz kid'

By Susan A. Romano, AFTAC Public Affairs

PATRICK AIR FORCE BASE, Fla. – “What would you do if you were told you might only have six months to a year to live?”

This poignant, sobering question was posed by Damon Flores to followers of his blog after he learned he was diagnosed with recurrent thymic carcinoid, a rare type of malignant cancer. In March 2013, he had just come back from an appointment with his oncologist who had delivered the devastating news that his cancer was increasing in size and scope, despite the treatments he was undergoing. Point blank, Damon asked him, “How long do I have to live?” The oncologist’s somber guess was, “Six months to a year.”

Turning to his blog, he wrote, “I have no idea how any of this will turn out, but no matter what, I’m determined to make the best of whatever time I have left.”



And make the best of it he did.

Damon was a member of the Air Force Technical Applications Center’s Operating Location-Technology Coordination (OL-TC), where he served as a senior network engineer. “He came to us in 2006 as a junior technician, but he quickly became the ‘go-to’ guy in network operations,” said Ron Dancy, Damon’s supervisor. “He was extremely bright and incredibly driven.”

When AFTAC was preparing to relocate to its new facility, Damon was the linchpin in the seamless transition from one building to another. “Any time you have to physically move information technology from one location to another, it’s incredibly difficult,” said Dancy. “As our onsite tech lead, Damon basically engineered our entire network infrastructure from the ground up. He impressed engineers who had far more experience with his knowledge and technical expertise.”

Despite his grim diagnosis, Damon worked through his illness until his body could take no more. As he prepared to leave his job – a job he deeply loved – his office arranged for him to take a tandem skydive jump, something that had been on his bucket list for a long time.

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“My boss generously paid my way for this,” Damon blogged. “He even hooked me up with a great video and photography package to document the incredible experience.”

Dancy said, “I really didn’t know just how much the jump meant to him. He went home and turned the whole event into this really incredible video that he posted online. His mother later commented that the jump made a huge impact on Damon – that we cared enough to do that for him. I think we all just wanted to let him know how much he meant to us and that he would always be a part of our extended work family.”

Describing him as extremely humble, kind and quiet, co-worker Sasha Hodge wistfully recounted what she misses most about Damon.



“He was a dedicated worker and loyal friend, and I miss his humor,” she said. “He always had witty jokes and made the office a better place to work. He truly was ingenious.”

Joseph Convery, Director of OL-TC, made the decision to dedicate his conference room to Damon because so much of his directorate’s IT infrastructure was a direct result of Damon’s involvement.

“It seemed fitting to have Damon’s smiling face hanging on the wall of the room where we discuss so many of our success stories,” said Convery. “All of these can be directly attributed in some way to his incredible work, since IT supports everything we do. I wish I had more employees like him – always motivated, always enthusiastic, and always easy going. I wish he could have seen the end result of all his hard work. He is deeply missed.”

When asked to describe Damon with one word, Dancy said, “That’s easy. It would be ‘inspiring.’ He was a complete whiz kid when it came to computers and networks, and was like a sponge when it came to technology. He’d get really excited when asked to do hardware research, and oftentimes he would do research from home. He could never seem to get enough of it.”

On April 25, 2014, at the young age of 33, Damon passed away. His final blog entry was in response to a young woman who had recently learned she, too, had been diagnosed with carcinoid. In his ever-present optimism, and just four days before his passing, Damon wrote, “Please don’t let my experience negatively influence you. Every carcinoid case is different, and there is still hope for everyone that can catch it before getting too far out of hand. I wish you the best of luck in your coming fight.”

Make the best of it, indeed.