

Rockefeller University Announces Scholarship Fund in Name of Employee Who Died at World Trade Center

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Shaheed Mohammed Salman Hamdani Memorial Fund will benefit Pakistani-American Students

Rockefeller University's Acting President Thomas P. Sakmar, M.D., announced today the establishment of the Shaheed Mohammed Salman Hamdani Memorial Fund, named for the 23-year-old research technician who died while responding to the terrorist attack at the World Trade Center on Sept. 11, 2001.

The scholarship fund, created by his mother, Talat Hamdani, will provide scholarships to outstanding Pakistani-American students. Hamdani emigrated with his family from Pakistan at the age of one.

"That Sal would rush to the World Trade Center site that horrible Tuesday morning to help his fellow New Yorkers was not a surprise to his colleagues at the University," Sakmar said at a memorial service today. "The Rockefeller University campus is a sanctuary of peace and tranquility on the Upper East Side of Manhattan. Sal did not have to head downtown that morning, but he did.

"Those who knew Sal understand why. They remember his boundless enthusiasm, his generosity, and his sense of caring."

Missing since Sept. 11, Hamdani's remains were identified March 21 at the site of the former World Trade Center.

A Howard Hughes Medical Institute employee at the university for two months before he died on Sept. 11, Hamdani was last seen leaving his mother's house in Queens at 8:15 a.m. that day. It is assumed that he was traveling into the city en route to the university on the elevated number 7 train, just in time to see the towers burning. Hamdani, a trained Emergency Medical Technician, likely diverted his route to assist in the rescue efforts at the site of the attack.

"From day one, when his mother contacted us, we hoped he had not gone down to the site," says Joseph Nekola, Rockefeller's senior director of security. "But everyone who knew him thought that was exactly what he would have done, that he would immediately have wanted to help. We were in touch continuously with law enforcement officials, who all along were treating him as a victim."

Hamdani excelled at science and graduated from Queens College last June with a degree in chemistry. He had been employed in the Protein/DNA Technology Center on the Rockefeller campus.

Hamdani's supervisor Brian Imai, director of the center, says, "Like most kids right out of college, Sal was energetic and full of potential. He wanted to go on to medical school and seemed to have both the talent and the drive to fulfill that dream. We all extend our deepest sympathies to his family."

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