

University of Minnesota Student Honored for His Support of Autism and Disability Services

Leo Dworsky, a U of M junior, and the K.A.H.R. Foundation are being honored for their support of people with autism, disabilities and mental health issues.

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/EINPresswire.com/ -- Leo Dworsky, a University of Minnesota junior, along with the K.A.H.R. Foundation, are being honored for their support of Minnesotans with autism, disabilities and co-occurring mental health issues. They have been selected as the 2024 Louise Whitbeck Fraser Award winners.



Leo Dworsky singing with Kat Perkins at the 2023 Fraser Gala

The award is given annually to an individual and an organization that demonstrates a commitment to the Fraser mission: to make a meaningful and lasting difference in the lives of children, teens, adults and families with diverse intellectual, emotional and physical needs. It

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Leo Dworsky, Louise Whitbeck Fraser Award Winner

honors Fraser founder Louise Whitbeck Fraser, who opened a school for children with disabilities in her Minneapolis home in 1935.

Leo attends the University of Minnesota and performs with the University Opera Theatre. When he was 2½, he was nonverbal and diagnosed with autism. He attended Fraser School and received therapy. His favorite teacher helped bring him out of his shell, and he began talking. At 4, Leo discovered a love for singing and joined the Minnesota Boychoir.

“But I credit Fraser for helping give me my voice,” says Leo.

At age 11, Leo sang “Imagine” by John Lennon at the Fraser Annual Benefit. He’s performed at the event every year since, singing with Paul Peterson, Philip Sheppard and Kat Perkins. Leo has also held multiple Fraser concert fundraisers, including one concert that was live streamed on the Fraser Facebook page.

“I decided to host fundraisers to raise awareness of Fraser and the services they provide,” says Leo. “The fundraisers also provided me an opportunity for me to grow as a musician, since I was putting together a full-length concert on my own.”

Leo said he was shocked, but honored when he learned he was receiving the award.

“I first thought was there are so many other people that deserve the award,” says Leo. “Then I thought, singing at the benefit, fundraising and the advocacy work I do; I guess I can see how it happened.”

The K.A.H.R. Foundation is a family foundation — founded by Jeannine M. Rivet and Warren G. Herreid II — to support nonprofits that make an impact in healthcare, education and the community. Jeannine was formerly the CEO of Optum, Ingenix and UnitedHealthcare. Warren is a retired U.S. Army Lieutenant Colonel.

Since 2008, K.A.H.R. has donated over \$235,000 to support the expansion of Fraser programs, including Fraser Career Planning and Employment services.

“Career opportunities are so critical for individuals with autism and disabilities, and it’s critical that families know how to support their children and grandchildren,” says Jeannine.

When a family member received a diagnostic assessment at Fraser, Jeannine and Warren were introduced to the nonprofit. Jeannine later met Fraser President & CEO Diane S. Cross and expressed an appreciation for Fraser’s work. The two soon became friends.

“It’s an honor to be recognized,” says Jeannine. “We’re so grateful to Diane and Fraser for all they’ve done for the community by providing services that didn’t exist before or weren’t available to many people. Fraser demonstrates its positive impact in people’s lives every day.”

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