

By Michele Morgan Bolton | GLOBE CORRESPONDENT NOVEMBER 29, 2012



SUZANNE ROSSELLI

Nick Rosselli (right) says Morelli (left) led him “to live more in the moment.”

Tim Morelli created his “Positivity Squadron” as a way of arming himself with support during his 2007 cancer fight.

Although he lost that battle, the insights and information he shared in mass e-mail blasts still inspire the squadron’s members five years later.

On the list are dozens of new and old friends, relatives, and a cadre of acquaintances he picked up along the way who remain in contact, and raise money for cancer causes in his name.

To date, more than \$50,000 has been donated through marathons, bike races, and fund-raisers.

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“It is really incredible to see how many people cared about him and wanted to continue his positivity,” said Tim’s brother Jerry Morelli Jr. “He wanted everyone to think positively about him, and life in general. Even in his last notes, he was always joking and grateful.”

The Morelli family plans to create a nonprofit organization called “Tim’s Positivity Squadron” to further the philanthropy. Squadroneers, as they are known, can keep up with one another and leave notes about Tim at timmerelli.com.

Tim’s sister Celia Gillis rereads his messages to the squadron. She said she is a better person because of them. “They were positive and quirky, and you always looked forward to them. I look at them and I laugh and cry.”

Nick Rosselli was a preschool classmate at The Little Red Schoolhouse in Holbrook, and he and Tim remained inseparable even when Tim went to Xaverian Brothers High School in Westwood and Nick stayed local.

“We’d still get together every afternoon and drive around for hours listening to hip-hop music, feeling cool,” Rosselli said.

Like many, Rosselli looked forward to Tim’s e-mails — because they contained thoughts about things most people don’t notice. “They were the important things that you didn’t even see,” said Rosselli, who now lives in New Jersey. “Because of him I’ve tried to live more in the moment.”

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Jerry Morelli and his wife Marianne are proud of their son’s legacy as a

Graziella Brunetti of Long Island met Tim in 2002 during freshman year at Fordham University. They later worked in a service project at Navajo reservations in the West.

photographer. Tim Morelli died in 2007 of Lymphoma.

“It was a really unique and spiritual experience out there, and that’s where he found that passion,” she said of his love of photography.

“Tim’s friends that I am in touch with still use the messages and themes from the Positivity Squadron today,” she said. “When things are challenging, and times are difficult, it reminds us to see the positive and keep hope alive as Tim always did.”

In a letter to Tim’s parents, Brunetti described her last phone call with Tim, on Oct. 21, 2007, just 10 days before he died. Brunetti said Tim thanked her for being in the squadron, and giving him unconditional love.

“He continued to demonstrate positivity, gratitude, and love,” she wrote. “He really is a model for how we are supposed to live. And he got it all in, in 27 years.”

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