

The Rhett McCool Memorial Scholarship



Rhett McCool, a lifelong resident of Palatka, Florida, and 2019 graduate of Allen D. Nease High School in St. Johns County, Florida, was tragically taken from us in a single vehicle accident on March 29, 2020, at the young age of 18. Rhett left behind his mother, Ashley McCool, and father, Matt McCool, both life-long educators in Putnam and St. Johns Counties. His older brother, Clay McCool, is currently a student at the University of Florida.

Rhett is greatly missed by his family and friends who wish to hear just one more, “Hey Ma,” “Hey Pop,” “Yes Ma’am,” or “Heck yeah!” Rhett didn’t meet a stranger and loved all people no matter their life choices or circumstance. He was that person who would chat with folks for hours using the best manners and charming wit, always making people feel better after their conversation.

Rhett attended elementary and middle school in Palatka, and when he chose to attend Nease High School, where his dad served as Athletic Director, he had no problems fitting in- he quickly found his fellow country boys and made friends in every crowd. He was always a country boy at heart. When he wasn’t working, Rhett could be found working on his truck, hunting in the woods with his dad, going to movies with his mom, fishing with his brother, driving long dirt roads spinning his tires, and hanging out around a fire singing with his beloved friends.



When Rhett was a little boy and was asked what he wanted to be when he grew up, he would always answer, “A Worker Man!” Rhett’s life dream was to become a diesel mechanic, own his own shop, and raise a family in his hometown of Palatka- a place he was so proud to call home. When Rhett passed away, he had just started down the path to officially becoming an auto mechanic. He loved his job as a technician in the service department at Beck Ford and was quickly working through the mechanics training program. He would come home bragging that he serviced more cars than anyone in the shop, and he had just proudly purchased his first Snap-On tool box.

Rhett spent his early days helping his dad work the athletic fields in Putnam and St. Johns counties, and as soon as he could legally get a job, he went after it. Rhett's first job was a small tire shop in Jacksonville. When his mom asked him how he secured the job, Rhett replied, "I just looked up every auto shop within 50 miles and called each one until somebody agreed to let me come to work." From that moment on, he never slowed down. He worked with Casey Mullis and Brandon Teal's lawn businesses where he learned about working a long hot summer's day. He also spent many hours with his uncle, Harley Robbins, assisting him at JB Glass. He was becoming much like his Uncle Charlie, a former glazer- when riding around town, he would point out all the windows and doors he repaired and tell his family about the amazing customers he met. No matter where he spent his hours working, he did so proudly and with the biggest smile. He simply loved to work!



During a job at a golf cart shop in August of his senior year, he learned how quickly life can slow down. He suffered a tragic injury that resulted in a life-threatening bacterial infection and the amputation of all the toes on his right foot. After months of surgeries, weeks of treatment for infection, and many hours of physical therapy, Rhett learned to walk again and never looked back. Everyone was just amazed at his positive attitude and perseverance through many tough days that would put most people down. It didn't matter how painful or frustrating it became, Rhett found a way to thank God for all he had. His parents remember the time when Dr. Patel had to tell Rhett he was going to lose his toes,

and Rhett's immediate response was, "Well at least I get to keep my foot." He counted down the days that he could get back to school, drive his truck, and go back to working with his hands.

While Rhett was home recovering, people from the Palatka and St. Augustine communities poured their hearts into encouraging and supporting Rhett with meals, kind words, and monetary donations. Rhett used to comment that if he had not had that unfortunate injury, he would have never gotten to know so many kind people.





As a way to give back to these communities, Rhett's family would like to award a scholarship to two high school seniors- one from Putnam County and one from St. Johns County. These recipients should exemplify the great qualities that Rhett exhibited- a kind and deserving student who works hard, loves his/her family and community, and plans to pursue a chosen career by attending an accredited college or technical school.

The family hopes to award this scholarship annually for the next 18 years- to honor Rhett for the 18 years he blessed so many family and friends with his love and amazing smile!

Anyone wishing to contribute to the Rhett McCool Memorial Scholarship fund can do so by contacting rhettmccoolscholarship@gmail.com.

Scholarship Application Requirements

Candidates must be graduating seniors from district high schools in Putnam and St. Johns County, Florida who plan to attend a college or technical institution. Two awards will be given for \$1000 each- one to a student from Putnam County and one to a student from St. Johns County. Applications will be accepted from April 1, 2021- April 30, 2021.

Applications will only be considered when the following items are sent together in one email (PDF documents preferred).

1. Completed Scholarship Application Form
2. Resume
3. The recipient of this scholarship should exemplify those character traits that Rhett set as a priority in his life. Please submit an essay that shows how you:
 - a. Remain positive and keep a grateful attitude in tough times.
 - b. Support your friends and family with a kind word and helping hand.
 - c. Get up each day with a smile and work hard!
4. Letter of recommendation from a teacher or community member

Please send the above documents by email to: rhettmccoolscholarship@gmail.com

Candidates are judged on the basis of scholarship and character. Selection is made without regard to race, religion, color, gender, national origin or ancestry.

Scholarship winners must provide the name and address of the college/technical institution upon enrollment in the fall and provide proof of enrollment. A check will then be issued to the school in the name of the recipient.

The Rhett McCool Memorial Scholarship Application Form

Full name _____

Home address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

Home phone _____ Cell _____

Email address _____

High School _____

Weighted GPA _____ Unweighted GPA _____

College/Technical Institution you plan to attend in the fall:

Area of study and/or future job goals:

Accomplishment you are most proud of:

I certify that the information on the application is correct.

Applicant's signature _____

Date Submitted _____