

A life with strokes of creativity

Plano: Display features works of late teen plagued by depression

By LINDA STEWART BALL
Staff Writer

"My first step in the clouds occurred when I lifted a crayon. ... I knew what to do with it. When it softly touched the paper, my life began."

— Grant Halliburton, written at age 11

Long before the dark clouds of

depression cloaked his brilliant light, Grant Halliburton was a talented and prolific young artist.

Whether writing poetry, performing original music or capturing the essence of a person with colorful brush strokes, he was driven to create.

Proof of his prodigious gifts, which can be seen in 100 paintings and drawings, will be displayed at the ArtCentre of Plano this week. The opening reception for "Journey: The Art, Music and Words of Grant Halliburton" will be from 6 to 8 p.m. Tuesday. The exhibit runs through June 1.

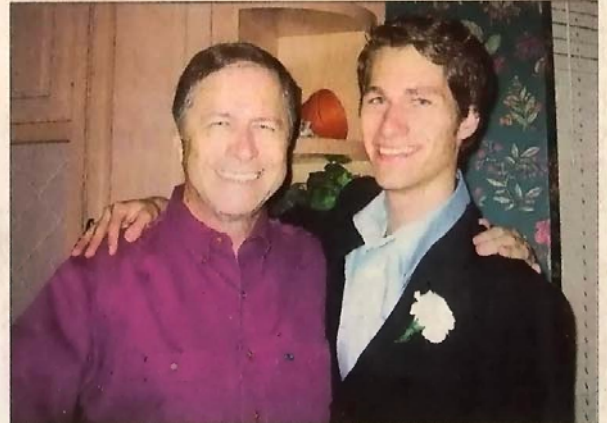
"This young man was extremely talented," said Suzy Jones, the ArtCentre's executive director. "He had an insight into his own life and the kind of world he was existing in because of this disease."

Grant, a popular 2005 graduate of Plano West Senior High School with an easy smile, was diagnosed as having bipolar disorder in September.

He died in November after leaping from a 10-story building in Dallas.

Grant was 19 years old.

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"People just loved to be around him," Alan Halliburton says of his son Grant, who died in November at age 19.

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COLLIN COUNTY

Young artist's life cut short by depression

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"It is the worst pain a parent can go through," said his mother, Vanita Halliburton of Plano. "But the pain is far surpassed by the joy of being touched by his life for the past 19 years; that's what takes you forward."

Grant's parents created a foundation in his name as a tribute to his creative and generous spirit. Its mission is twofold: raise awareness of adolescent mental health programs and provide scholarships to deserving art students.

Jennifer Miesse, 17, a senior at Plano West who plans to major in art at Texas State University in San Marcos, was awarded the foundation's first \$1,000 scholarship this month.

Jennifer, who said she knew Grant by reputation as one of the school's "friendliest people," admired his talent and was humbled by the award.

The selection committee said the qualities in her work reflected Grant's approach to art: originality, conceptual thinking and diversity of style.

"What was so wonderful about Grant is he really loved to make art," said Douglas Darracott, Grant's 12th-grade Advanced Placement art teacher at Plano West. "He's the kind of student that you dream about and always hope for."

Grant had been drawing and sketching since he was a toddler.

"He was a happy, wonderful, normal child and so creative from the time he was so young," his mother said. "I never went anywhere in the car without paper and pencils for him."

He began piano lessons at 5. A few years later he was writing his own music. In high school, he was

IF YOU GO

What: Opening reception of "Journey: The Art, Music and Words of Grant Halliburton"

When: 6 to 8 p.m. Tuesday. The exhibit ends June 1.

Where: ArtCentre of Plano, 1039 E. 15th St. (corner of 15th Street and Avenue K in downtown Plano)

Cost: Free

For more information, call 972-423-7809 or visit www.artcentreofplano.org. Donations may be made at www.granthalliburton.org or mailed to:
Grant Halliburton Foundation
P.O. Box 431
Addison, Texas 75001

recording it.

"He was a really passionate person, about his friends and his art and his music," said Taylor Webb, 19, Grant's longtime friend and music-writing partner.

Taylor said he is majoring in music composition and neuroscience at the University of Southern California because Grant turned him on to music in seventh grade — inviting him to improvise on the keyboards at his house.

In high school, the two were in various rock bands together, switching among keyboards, vocals and guitar.

Accepted at colleges in Boston, Chicago, New York City and Kansas City, Grant attended the University of Texas at Austin for a few weeks last fall before returning home. He told his mother he couldn't function and needed help.

That's when what used to be called manic depression was diagnosed. Caused by a chemical imbalance in the brain, the illness is like an emotional roller coaster characterized by the extreme highs of mania and the deep lows of depression.

About 3 to 4 percent of the adult population is bipolar, according to a recent estimate. The suicide rate among those is roughly 15 percent.

"That's high," said Trisha Suppes, professor of psychiatry at UT Southwestern Medical Center.

Nonetheless, "this is a very treatable illness," she said. "It's just a matter of finding the medication option that works for them; one that doesn't diminish creativity or have too many side effects."

Dr. Suppes, who also directs Southwestern's Bipolar Disorder Research Program, said a great deal of literature reveals that a high percentage of bipolar individuals are also very creative.

"Grant struggled with depression for a long, long time," Taylor said. "I was particularly concerned when he didn't stay in school."

When he came home, his parents checked him into Zale Lipshy University Hospital in Dallas. After 28 days there, Grant seemed to be doing better, they said.

He visited his older sister, who was away at college in California, and was making plans for the future when the end came.

"It's just so devastating," said his father, Alan Halliburton of Dallas. "There's just so much lost. ... He was just this bolt of energy and had this gentle loving spirit, and it was contagious. People just loved to be around him. ... My son, he was just amazing."