

Speech: Remembering Simon Hart – A Beacon for
Future Health Heroes

October 6, 2025

At

North Raleigh Christian Academy
7300 Perry Creek Rd, Raleigh, NC 27616

Good afternoon, everyone! What an incredible group of future health professionals you are.

Thank you so much for inviting me to North Raleigh Christian Academy today.

My name is Ted Hart, and I'm Simon Hart's father. As I stand here looking out at all of you—bright, driven high schoolers in HOSA — I'm reminded of the passion that fuels this club.

HOSA isn't just about textbooks or lab coats; it's a powerhouse for leadership, motivation, and recognition, all laser-focused on launching careers in healthcare.

You choose this path because you want to heal, innovate, and lead in ways that change lives.

And today, I want to honor my son Simon by sharing his story—not just the heartbreaking end, but the vibrant life that lit up our world.

Simon left us too soon in 2022 from diabetic ketoacidosis, or DKA, triggered by undiagnosed Type 1 diabetes.

But through his memory, we're turning pain into purpose, much like the advocacy and awareness projects you tackle in HOSA competitions.

Let's walk through Simon's life together. By the end, I hope you'll see how HOSA equips you to spot the signs and save lives—just like Simon would have wanted.

Simon was the kind of son, brother, and friend who made every room warmer, every challenge feel conquerable.

Born with that rare spark, the one that says, "Let's make this world a little better"—he grew up on a farm that became his sanctuary.

A sanctuary filled with crystals, animals, and nature's wonders. He was filled with curiosity and kindness.

At Cedar Ridge High School, Simon dove headfirst into the kind of well-rounded life many of you are living right now:

academics that stretched his mind, arts that fed his soul, sports that built his grit, and service.

He graduated summa cum laude, draping himself in honor cords from the National Honor Society and the Tri-M Music Honor Society.

But it wasn't the accolades that defined him; it was how he used them.

Volunteering with Habitat for Humanity, he swung hammers to build homes for families in need—hands-

on service that taught empathy, the same empathy you'll channel in patient care or community health initiatives through HOSA.

His videography skills? He turned them into tools for storytelling, crafting documentaries and music videos much like the health awareness campaigns you design for HOSA's prepared speaking or health career display events.

After high school, Simon charged into UNC Charlotte as a Mechanical Engineering major with a math minor, entering as a second-semester freshman thanks to dual-enrollment classes in chemistry, economics, and psychology at Durham Technical Community College.

Imagine that drive—eager, unflashy, always about the journey. Academically, he was a force: Dean's List every semester with a flawless 4.0 in one of the toughest programs.

Invited to Tau Beta Pi as a sophomore, he was asked to be a teaching assistant, though his packed schedule said no.

His high school math teacher nailed it in a recommendation letter: "Simon is a very bright young man with an exceptional work ethic...

He is always willing to ask questions as well as help others... He appreciates a challenge and works persistently until he understands all facets of the problem."

That persistence? It's the DNA of every HOSA member —you don't just learn; you master, then mentor.

UNC Charlotte honored that by awarding him his degree posthumously.

But Simon's gifts went beyond equations; they bloomed in creativity, the kind that heals as much as it inspires.

As tenor saxophonist in his high school's concert, jazz, and marching bands, he rose to woodwind captain his senior year, earning Tri-M honors.

Awards were nice, but the real magic was in the bonds: fundraising for band trips, nailing solos that moved crowds, or slinging concessions at sport games to support band.

At his vigil, a bandmate played "Amazing Grace" on sax in his honor, and inspired by Simon, alumni formed a group that dedicated "At Morning's First Light" to him.

Think about that leadership—rallying a community through music, just like HOSA's creed calls you to "believe in myself and my work" while serving others.

Outside band, Simon forged knives from scrap like railroad spikes, self-taught and mesmerized by the "quench" that turned raw metal into something sharp and useful.

We'd watch a cable series called Forged in Fire, yelling at the screen as blades were tested during the “apple slice”.

Whenever something mechanical broke on the farm, Simon welded it. Another skill he learned on his own. He used his 3D-printer to make gadgets.

His creativity wasn't hoarded; it was shared gifts for friends, fixes for family.

Athletically, Simon was a whirlwind of energy, the teammate who made practice feel like play.

Varsity tennis player, founder of Cedar Ridge's Ultimate Frisbee team, led drills with that infectious enthusiasm you bring to HOSA officer roles or team-based competitions.

Mentored by his science teacher, a world-champion archer, he joined Wolf Ridge Archery Club and later coached at UNCC's club.

We now honor him with the Annual Simon Hart Memorial Archery Tournament, raising funds for diabetes awareness, and blending sport with service.

Simon surfed Atlantic waves, skied fresh powder, hiked epics from Virginia's Dragon's Tooth to Yosemite's granite giants.

He piloted drones over trails, geocached hidden treasures, and metal-detected beaches.

Our 2017 solar eclipse road trip to South Carolina? Pure awe under totality's shadow.

That last summer in 2022, we conquered Cadillac Mountain in Maine, Mount Washington in New Hampshire, and Mount Mansfield in Vermont. We camped and Simon started the campfires with his flint. We sat around the campfire and he shared ideas and his dreams by the flames.

On the way home, Simon turned to me, he grinned and said, "Dad, this is the best trip ever."

The Grand Canyon was next on deck for next year.

Simon's adventures weren't solo; they were invitations to live bigger, fuller—like the resilience you build in HOSA's leadership academy, turning obstacles into opportunities.

At his heart, though, Simon was pure love—kind, humorous, the guy who never uttered a harsh word, who lingered at parties to make sure everyone got home safe.

He and his sister Allegra were thick as thieves, co-starring in an indie horror flick called *The Welder* and plotting an *Amazing Race* takeover.

Simple joys grounded him: hunting crystals in our backyard stream, crashing on the couch with family for movie nights.

He was my "terrific kid" who "wanted to spend time with his parents" and who brimmed with potential.

And those hugs - soul-filling wraps that said, "I care about you and it's great to have you in my life."

Simon was the friend who'd remind you why you signed up for this healthcare experience—to connect, to care, to make the world less lonely.

But here's where the story shifts, and why I'm here with you HOSA trailblazers.

Losing Simon to DKA shattered us. Subtle signs—insatiable thirst, constant bathroom runs—slipped by, chalked up to his go-go-go life.

By the time symptoms screamed, it was too late: his body, starved of insulin from diabetes, turned fat for fuel, flooding him with toxic acids.

I talked to him on a Thursday, he was gone on Friday.

No parent, no sibling, no friend should face that.

In his name, we launched Friends of Simon Hart to spotlight DKA dangers and fund prevention.

We're building a scholarship at UNC Charlotte to honor Simon and make others aware of DKA.

Visit friendsofsimonhart.org to dive in, grab resources for your chapter's health fairs, or even collaborate on a screening drive.

Simon might be here today if we'd caught his symptoms early; let's make sure the next Simon—or you—gets that chance.

If Simon's story hit hard—showing how undiagnosed diabetes can lead to deadly DKA—meet Katerina, the high school junior who dodged that bullet.

Juggling AP classes, dance, and clubs like you all do, she ignored warning signs for months until they couldn't be dismissed.

Her journey? It's your quick guide to spotting diabetes—saving a friend, family member, or even yourself.

It crept up in fall 2019: Katerina felt drained from simple stairs or dance routines she'd once nailed effortlessly.

By late fall, exhaustion stuck around, joined by wild thirst—downing water nonstop—and constant bathroom runs.

She brushed it off as stress.

Winter worsened it: Hunger hit hard after meals, dance left her fading mid-song, hair starting to fall out during brushings, and she'd dropped pounds without trying—slimmer than her already lean frame.

A February check-up noted the weight dip and hair loss, but skipping the thirst and hunger details meant no deep tests—just "wait if things get worse."

Spring turned urgent: Cravings for sweets (not her style) raged, nights blurred into chugging water till her stomach rebelled, then midnight wakeups to pee and drink more.

Exhausted but swamped, she pushed on—until May 2020.

During a telehealth chat, spilling every symptom, bloodwork revealed sky-high sugars (flagged as "not fasted," but she had). Urine screamed trouble: glucose overload and massive ketones, a DKA red alert.

Blood sugar level over 500 mg/dL—five times normal. She was ER bound.

Admitted at 95 pounds, A1C at 17.4%, her immune system attacking her insulin production.

Five years on, Katerina is a student at the NC State College of Veterinary Medicine, living her life's dream, life full throttle.

Her takeaway? Tune into "not normal" vibes: killer fatigue, thirst/peeing marathons, ravenous hunger (especially sweets), sneaky weight loss, odd hair or skin shifts.

Don't delay and demand bloodwork.

Be your own advocate.

HOSA heroes, this is your arena. Simon and Katerina's stories?

Fuel for your fire.

You've got the skills: motivation to persist, recognition to celebrate wins, a creed that demands you "act in the future interest of the community."

Simon accomplished oceans—not for spotlights, but love of life, learning, people.

From sax solos to ascending summits, he was our light. Today, feel him as your brother-in-arms, innovating quietly, adventuring boldly.

We ache daily, but his spirit is alive - urging action.

Honor him: Learn the signs, screen boldly, advocate relentlessly.

Save the next life.

Thank you for remembering Simon—and for being the change.

Go light up the world.