

Roadway Worker Memorial Scholarship recipient reflects on impact of The ATSS Foundation

Aaron Baker was in elementary school when his father's highway department truck was struck by a train.

Jack M. Baker and a passenger in the truck died a short time later in Minnesota hospitals but Aaron didn't find out right away.

"My mother waited to tell me about my father until the day after he was killed because she was coping with the loss herself," Aaron said. "It took a toll on all of us, but as soon as my mom told me what happened, I knew that I wanted to do something to help others in my future."

Now, a little more than a decade later, Aaron is a freshman at Winona State University in Minnesota, studying to become a physical therapist.



Aaron Baker was 9 years old when his father was killed in a roadway accident in 2009. He is now in college and recipient of a Roadway Worker Memorial Scholarship from The ATSS Foundation.

He is one of nine recipients of The ATSS Foundation's Roadway Worker Memorial Scholarship Program for the 2019-20 school year. The Foundation provides scholarships for loved ones of fallen or permanently disabled roadway workers.

Since 2002, The Foundation has helped 74 people with their post-high school educational goals, giving \$237,000 in scholarship assistance.

In 2004, The Foundation added the Chuck Bailey Memorial Scholarship, which is given to applicants who demonstrate a commitment to volunteerism. So far, 18 students have received those scholarships, with a total value of \$18,000.

Aaron, 18, said he was grateful to have received The ATSS Foundation scholarship, which is helping him achieve his goal to work in the physical therapy field.

"I feel lucky to have known exactly what I wanted to do later in life," he said. "While it was hard to go through the loss of a parent and lose all of the experiences I

would have had with my father, it made me realize I need to be the best person I can be and work hard to reach my goals."

Jack Baker, of Le Center, Minn., was 42 years old and had been working for the Blue Earth County Highway Department for 10 years when he was killed in July 2009. He was driving a county dump truck and coworker Todd J. Ziegler, 43, was in the passenger seat when the truck was hit by a locomotive near Lake Crystal, according to The Free Press in Mankato, Minn.

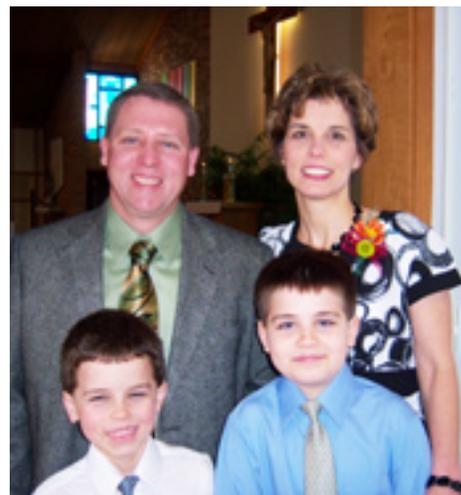
Aaron said the memory of his father keeps him motivated.

"Whenever I need help with something in my life, I think about him and how he would want me to excel at anything and everything I try to accomplish," Aaron said. "I use the memory of my father for extra focus. I think The Foundation recognized that and I am extremely grateful." 

Help individuals affected by roadway work incidents at Foundation.ATSSA.com/Donate.



Aaron Baker and his father, Jack Baker of Le Center, Minn., enjoy a river outing in May 2008. Jack Baker worked for the Blue Earth County (Minn.) Highway Department.



This family photo shows Jack and Colleen Baker with sons, Aaron, front left, and Alex.