

Grieving father wrote book to honour son's wishes

Teenager Jonathan Leitao became a source of inspiration and comfort to his family

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CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Jonathan Leitao (right) travelled to many countries with his big brother Matthew, and parents Vince and Espy, and inspired his family during his tragic journey through cancer and spiritual awakening.

Richmond Hill home.

But when told he was dying, Jonathan had little anguish, his father said. He cried for about 20 minutes. After that, he spoke like it was an event that was happening and moved on, Leitao said.

"That's what changed my life," Leitao said. "Jonathan said: 'I'm not afraid to die. It's nothing,'" Leitao said.

"I was amazed, looking at the way he was holding himself (together) and talking. It's a spirit

Book *Jonathan, Do You Know Me?* is personal story of loss and grief transcended by a spiritual awakening.

within himself that liberated him."

This teenager became a pillar of wisdom and strength for his family.

"It was a tragedy," Leitao said. "Our kid was dying, yet comfort was coming from him. He asked me, 'Are you going to be OK?' I said 'no'. He said, 'You have to accept it, let go, then you will be OK.' I never taught him that. Where does a 16-year-old get this insight, this wisdom?"

Jonathan was a student at St. Mary Immaculate Catholic Elementary School in Richmond Hill and went on to attend St. Theresa of Lisieux Catholic High School.

His obituary explains his final months.

"For the last 10 months he suffered bravely and patiently, prayerfully hoping for a cure. He eventually accepted that he is going home after just about 16 years on this earth, and helped us accept and let go."

Jonathan wanted to help other sick children, to explain to them the procedures he'd had so they wouldn't be afraid.

When he became sick, he realized he couldn't do this and was



hoping his father could help such children, instead.

Leitao wrote a self-published book *Jonathan, Do You Know Me? From loss of a child to spiritual awakening*, published in 2015. It is a personal story of loss and grief transcended by a spiritual awakening.

Proceeds from the book are being donated to The Hospital for Sick Children Foundation in honour of Jonathan.

Leitao knows his son would also have been happy to learn of his advocacy for changes to Ontario's Employment Standards Act. Leitao has lobbied for the introduction of Jonathan's Law, a bill dedicated to the memory of Jonathan that requests a provision of up to a 52-week bereavement leave for parents who lose a child.

Go to www.vinceleitao.com for more information.

Jonathan, Do You Know Me: From loss of a child to spiritual awakening is available at amazon.ca

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