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NEWS

Seton Hall alumnus launches new charity

By **Staff Writer**

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Photo via Facebook/Lodestarc/[caption] James Regan, who graduated in 2002, said that the focus of his charity, Lodestar Children's Services, is "empowering children and families." Regan said the organization specializes in providing home and community waiver-based services for children ages 5 to 21 who are psychiatrically disabled or placed in foster care, all while working to deliver their families with the necessary tools needed develop and improve their own system and unique needs. Regan said he had no intention of pursuing a career in nonprofit work as a freshman computer science major and credits his distanced starting point as one the things that helped shaped him. By his junior year, he said he acknowledged that computer science wasn't what he wanted to do with his life and switched to earn a degree in liberal studies. Regan said Msgr. William Harms was a crucial figure at a time when he was searching for a sense of direction. "He believed in me before I believed in myself," Regan said. "We instantly developed a special connection and as an undergrad he was pivotal for me—just as an ear, someone who knew I was struggling and was there to talk." Regan started working with youth after directing a summer camp and then supervising teenagers in a group home. Through the residential facility, Regan said he was able to obtain a master's degree in social work and take on a leadership role that allowed him to aid kids truly in need. "I went from doing residential work to in-home work and didn't realize how much programs like this would be the missing piece for kids I dealt with," Regan said. "In many cases they didn't need to be in a home or an institution" said Regan. In 2016, Regan founded Lodestar Children's Services. "Empowerment is behind everything we do," Regan said. "It motivates me to remember there's a whole lot of work to be done because if it's happening where I am, it's happening all over." Lodestar currently operates out of Long Island and is looking to expand throughout Queens, North Jersey and Westchester, Regan said. "I love this work," he said. "I know I'm never going to get rich off it but it's important and it means a great deal to me." Kristen Koehler, an assistant professor of public relations, explained that students can take a nonprofit communication course that she and the public relations department developed as one that "focuses specifically on internal and external communication strategies and tactics to make an impact." SHU alumnus Derek Neilson shared his support for James when traveling from Boston to Long Island for a Lodestar event. "I don't know when he became so inspiring, but a five-hour drive didn't seem so long to support such a worthy cause and great guy," Neilson said. When asked what he thought this represented of the Seton Hall community, Regan said, "It says that the time there was relevant...that the connections that we made were real, and meaningful and they endure." Regan hopes to make a change in the lives of youth with Lodestar. "Most of the time, the issues we deal with amount from people being a little lost, and when I was young, as an undergrad I was a little lost too," he said. *Eilish Montgomery can be reached at eilish.montgomery@student.shu.edu.*

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