

My Alports Ride

I would like to thank you for organizing such a worthwhile award. Reading about Paul Silver made me aware of how adventurous life can be and how following your dreams and enjoying life for the moment is what we should all be doing.

I would also like to be able to 'Pay It Forward' someday, but I realize there are more challenges that I must overcome. The main one is to complete my post-secondary education. Education has always been a top priority in our family. Both of my parents are teachers, working full time, and are still paying for my medical bills as well as college expenses. I would like to help ease that burden any way I can.

To me Alports isn't a disease, it is just part of me, my life. Even my best friends don't really understand, which is okay. The impact of Alports is that you are not 'normal', but who is?

I began this ride when my parents were training me to use the toilet. They discovered that my urine had a red tint. By first grade my teachers and parents realized I wasn't hearing well and I began wearing the big red tanks behind my ears. How's that for a kid that's just starting to build his self-esteem and starting his academic education. Sports were my release, and I was really pretty good at most things I tried. You should see me hoola hoop. Basketball was my baby though and I played in every game I could find all throughout my elementary and middle school years.

Just when I was at the top of the hill I was thrust into my freshman year at Newton High. It was difficult to keep up with school, basketball and golf practices, and I

began to get sick, hence my downward fall. After a month of mono, dialysis became my afterschool sport for the next ten months and my friends began to dwindle.

Thankfully I received my kidney transplant in November of 2009, finally completing my dialysis journey right in the middle of my junior year. Needless to say my high school years weren't going the greatest.

I am now very fortunate to be in my second year in college. My main focus the first year was to get through it and maintain my health while managing the 15 medications that I'm on, all myself. I did it, and now I want to dig deeper into who I am and what I want to become. I would like to become more involved in living my life to the fullest. I'm currently taking classes to pursue an audiology degree (the area of Alports that affected me most as a young child and still does). I've had hearing aids for so long, I think I could really make a difference in the hearing impaired world. I'm still exploring all the different avenues to take here at college and am keeping my options open.

I was one of two Laser designers at my high school and continue to do special projects with woodworking and the laser. I enjoy creating and designing and always have a project on the side. I continue to workout, play basketball with the guys in my dorm, as well as play golf with my sister and dad.

I would like this award to help pay some of the costs of college. My best chance of making something of myself and to help others is to finish my degree so I can pursue my goals. I could also use this award to help purchase a new laptop since my current laptop, which was my saving grace through dialysis, is on its last leg. A well working laptop is a must in college.

I appreciate the ways in which you are helping to impact Alports patient's lives and to get our true focus on our goals and ambitions. I have always believed it's not what challenges you face but how you react to those challenges that matter. Alports definitely helped me to mature faster. I've had many experiences and opportunities that I would have never had if it weren't for Alports. My ride is now at the fun part and I look forward to all the adventures and challenges ahead of me.

Thank you for considering my application for this award and the opportunity to help 'Pay It Forward'.