

My Life with Alport Syndrome

I would like to give a big thanks to this organization and to Paul Silver for leaving such a huge gift to young people like me who are affected by Alports. I first learned that I had Alports when I was 8 years old. My mom took me and my brother to get a physical for soccer and from there the journey began for my family into the renal world. My brother Kyle, who is 23, also has Alport Syndrome. We discovered that my mother Rebecca, is the carrier and thankfully, she's the only one in her family to be affected by it. For my brother and I that means more kidney donors.

I started having kidney failure when I was in the 9th grade and I had to quit wrestling, which was hard because I received the silver medal at state that year for our county. My school was very supportive through all my ups and downs and even sent home a tutor to help me keep up with my classes. I ended up on peritoneal dialysis on my 15th birthday which lasted almost 9 months.

I never gave up through all the hard times in high school and I decided since I couldn't wrestle that I would try out for band since I played the drums. During my sophomore year, I made it in the band and received the news that my mom's sister was a perfect match and that she would be my donor. In April of 2007, right before summer break I received my gift of life at the University of Alabama in Birmingham.

Everything was a success and my junior year was off to a great start. I made the drum line and was able to go to camp and participate in all the events that I missed out on when I was doing dialysis. I was on my way to graduating and going to college. Graduation means more to me now because it was the last time my grandfather was able to see me do anything because he was diagnosed with ALS 6 months later. He is

still with us battling ALS and he tells me all the time that he thinks I'm his hero for taking on so many challenges and remaining positive.

I'm now a college student and hope to graduate with a degree in pre-physical therapy because I love fitness and I want to help people with physical challenges. I have a good understanding of wanting a better quality of life because of Alport Syndrome. I have chosen to not drink or do drugs because I want my aunt to know how much her donated kidney means to me. I work out every day and keep my friends involved in the gym too. Luckily, I have great friends and a supportive family that are proud of me for being so compliant with my care.

I hope that I'm considered for this award because I would definitely use it for college expenses, which my parents would be very thankful for. I believe the best thing I can do for myself and others is to finish school. My mom graduated from college this past May and it really made an impact on me. She is my hero in life because I see her going through so much and through it all she finished school. I know if I'm considered for this award I will apply it towards my expenses and keep working hard to fulfill my dreams no matter what life throws my way. I can honestly say Alport Syndrome has made me tougher and wiser for my age.