

Growing up I always knew I had bad kidneys. From a young age, as far back as I can remember, I have always gone to see my nephrologist, Dr. Prasad Devarajan. Only around 7th grade was I formally told it was Alports. At this point I had noticed my hearing and my vision deteriorating. I had been wearing glasses for a year and I had just been fitted for hearing aids. At this point, the world had started to become a bit duller. Shapes and colors were less vibrant as my vision continued to get more blurred and sounds became quieter. From then until high school graduation, I realized these changes and was frustrated by them, but I didn't use the tools I had to help overcome them. I was stubborn to the idea that I was different or disabled in some way. I fought my tools; I didn't want to wear my glasses or hearing aids. I eventually came to terms with my glasses, because more and more people had them and it wasn't as out of the ordinary. However, I continued to fight wearing hearing aids, insisting that my hearing wasn't that bad. In a way, I came to see the world differently and I was convinced I was happy with that.

After high school, however, I realized that this content feeling I had towards my disabilities was going to make me less competitive in college. The summer leading up to my freshman year at the University of Minnesota I found myself asking others to repeat themselves more often. I found people getting angrier at me, not because I couldn't hear them, but because I had the ability to hear them and chose not to. I would sit off to the side of conversations most of the time just because I couldn't hear anyone and didn't want to anger anyone as I had done before. Since I'm a social person that enjoys meeting new people and talking, this was when I fully understood the impact that my hearing was having on my life, the impact that Alports was having. I knew that to be the person I wanted to be and to achieve the things that I wanted to achieve, inside and outside the classroom, I needed to come to terms with what I was living with.

That summer really changed how I saw Alports and how I saw myself. A lot of people have obstacles and challenges that they must face and one of the hardest to overcome is yourself. Realizing that it was my stubbornness to accept something that I had no control over that was holding me back was eye opening. After accepting Alports as something that I could not control and something that I will live with for years and years to come, life became easier. It was the hardest thing I've ever had to do and expect it to stay that way for a few more years. Living with Alports has shown me how to be honest with myself and how to respect and be thankful for the things around me.

After that summer I went on to have my freshman year at the University of Minnesota, where I joined the fraternity Phi Kappa Sigma and then subsequently held philanthropy chair the semester following my initiation. I also joined the Philippine Student Association where I continue to grow closer and closer to my Filipino heritage from my mother's side. Academically, I decided to go for a double major in computer science and mathematics at the College of Science and Engineering within the University of Minnesota. Now, at the beginning of my sophomore year, I am on track to be accepted into my first major, Computer Science, and now hold the position of recruitment chair and risk management chair within my fraternity.

I wish to receive this award to help pay for college tuition. It will help offset the cost of tuition to help me later on with debt and to help me save money for possible other challenges down the road, like a kidney failure. This help financially will also allow for more focus on scholastic work rather than a mix of that and financial stress. This scholarship will also help ease my parents' burden of helping pay for my college tuition.