

Colby Atkinson – Strong Arm Scholarship

The John Foy & Associates “Strong Arm” Leukemia Scholarship can help offset the expense of college and make it more affordable for me to pursue my dream. Going to college has always been an expectation and goal of mine. I will be attending the University of Delaware which will cost \$28,000 a year and I am concerned that the financial cost may be beyond what my family can afford. My family struggled not just emotionally but also financially from when I was diagnosed with leukemia on December 3, 2013. My mother had to take off work for over a year. Beating cancer wasn’t cheap but I am thankful that I had the support of my family and received the best treatments available. I will do anything I can to help alleviate the stress from my parents so they don’t worry about how they will help me pay for college. I have overcome many obstacles that life has thrown at me by surviving cancer and I do not want the expense of college to be an obstacle standing in my way of reaching my goal of continuing my education. I know that education is the best investment I can make in my life. This scholarship will help offset the cost of tuition and make it more affordable for me to pursue my education.

I believe that I possess many qualities that make me deserving of the “Strong Arm” Leukemia Scholarship. My accomplishments and goals have been enhanced through my life experiences. During my freshman year of high school, I was diagnosed with leukemia and needed a bone marrow transplant to save my life. My battle with cancer has provided me with opportunities to be a leader, participate in community service, and to help and influence the people around me. I strive to maintain focus on my academics, sharing my life experiences with others to inspire change, treat others with respect and kindness, and maintain a positive attitude. I am very proud of what I have accomplished and decided early on that my cancer was not going to control my life. I have endured more pain and suffering than most people my age, which has made me a stronger and more mature person. Cancer does not define me, but has contributed to

Colby Atkinson – Strong Arm Scholarship

the person that I am today. My experience with cancer has given me a fresh perspective on life. Let me explain the journey I have been on which has impacted my education and current goals.

Scholarship is characterized by a commitment of learning through diligence and effort. Maintaining high honor roll has been a goal that I have achieved since my freshman year and it has not always been easy. During my freshman year, I was diagnosed with a rare subtype of leukemia which caused me to be hospitalized for extended periods of time and unable to attend school for two years. It was important for me to keep up on my schoolwork despite the fact that I was in a hospital continually hooked up to machines that were pumping chemotherapy into my body or receiving 163 life-saving blood transfusions. Focusing on my academics allowed me to control something in my life, despite the fact that I could not control anything else that was happening to me. Believe it or not, doing schoolwork brought me comfort.

Just 5 months after being diagnosed with leukemia, I was entering the next phase of my treatment – a bone marrow transplant. If you think cancer sucks, try surviving a bone marrow transplant...now that was tough! During my bone marrow transplant, I was extremely sick and near death. Despite not feeling well or being very weak, I still put time aside so that I could complete some of my schoolwork. This may have just been listening to someone read me Romeo and Juliet because I was too weak to read the book myself. Once I came home I had to extend my schoolyear into the summer but I completed all of my coursework and earned an A in every class. I was determined to not fall behind in my academics.

Despite beating cancer and surviving a bone marrow transplant, my immune system was not strong enough to allow me to attend school during my sophomore year. I completed my sophomore year of courses online which allowed me the flexibility to work on schoolwork around my treatment schedule and when I had the energy. Cancer ravaged my body and effects

Colby Atkinson – Strong Arm Scholarship

from the treatments have caused irreversible damage to my skin, muscles and tissues. The longest part of the journey has been recovering my strength and mobility again. Three years later, I persevere through the struggles and gain some strength back each day. Although cancer has put some limitations on me, it can never truly change who I am and where I am going in life.

During my junior year I finally returned to school on a modified schedule because of my compromised immune system. When I walked through the doors of Smyrna High School, I think that I was the only student who was excited to be back at school. It had been so long since I was able to sit in a classroom with my friends and be a ‘normal’ kid again. Despite being out of school for two years, I returned to school taking Advanced Placement and Honor level classes as if I never missed a beat. I graduated in the top 10% of my class and earned a cumulative GPA of 3.95. I am very proud of what I have accomplished despite the obstacles of beating cancer. I didn’t let cancer get in my way.

Prioritizing my academics is going to be instrumental in achieving success and doing well in college. I have learned some of life’s hardest lessons at a young age and have prioritized my life. My education is a high priority for me and it is not something that I take for granted. My goal is to continue my education and work just as hard as I ever have. I plan on making the most of every moment while I am at college. Since my senior year, my experience of working with the football team as a student coach has shaped my future goals. I used my life experiences with my battle with cancer to inspire players to fight through adversity and push them to battle through their challenges. I am planning on majoring in Sports Management at the University of Delaware and am interested in pursuing a career that can keep me connected with sports.

Even though cancer has put me through tough times, it has taught me to never give up. I have overcome huge odds but most of all I will continue to persevere no matter what obstacles

Colby Atkinson – Strong Arm Scholarship

are thrown at me. There have been many ups and downs, stumbles and setbacks, but at the end of the road I have been able to do incredible things with my life. I believe with my positive attitude and thirst for life, I can and will succeed at whatever is thrown at me. I am not “the kid who had cancer.” I am Colby Atkinson, the kid who will stop at nothing to inspire others and achieve his dreams. I am looking forward to what awaits me in my future!