

When discussing the effects of cancer on my education, one would expect me to list the setbacks and disadvantages which continue to remind myself of their existence. I would like to focus on the positives effects on my education instead though.

To my knowledge, I am the only student in my school who has survived cancer. As a result, when I tell my story, it seems to place me on a separate level than others who are trying to become involved in the fight against the disease. It seems as if I inherently have more credibility based simply off experience. As a chair for the American Cancer Society's Relay for Life in Jackson County, Missouri, one of my many responsibilities is to create passion in others for the cause of fighting cancer. In large-scale meetings, I often take a poll: "raise your hand if you or someone you know has been affected by cancer." Infallibly, every hand in the room hangs in the air. I give the survey participants time to analyze the data. After telling them to return their hands to its former position, I say something along the lines of, "cancer affects all of us," followed by other words of empowerment and inspiration.

To me, surviving cancer is not a source of augmented credibility, but rather a source of adjusted perspective. Every hand that goes up in those meetings is an individual and unique perspective. This is one of the ways cancer has affected my experience in school. There is the son of the cancer survivor and the daughter of the cancer victim. There is the sister of the oncologist and the brother of the non-profit volunteer. My experience with cancer has led me to understand this. All are made stronger by the effect that cancer has on them, not only the survivor.

I was diagnosed with leukemia on October 23, 2012. After a long four days of seeking to solve several medical anomalies, I was admitted into the intensive care unit at Children's Mercy Hospital in Kansas City, Missouri. Brady and Sarah were my nurses for the three days that I was there. They saw my story from the perspective of ICU nurses with very specific instructions on how to treat me. This perspective differed greatly from that of Kara, the child-life worker in the ICU at the time. She saw my story through the lens of a psychologist whose goal was to support children through entertainment and engagement. Every person I encountered in the hospital saw me in a different light—a bald kid walking down the hall, a boy asleep in a wheelchair, a patient to help brush their teeth. My family, of course, saw me from the perspective of a sister or mother or father. These people, whether through a quick smile or through kindly helping give me treatment, are the reason I beat cancer.

I have become involved in many efforts to fight against cancer. Janeane at the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society and Amie at the American Cancer Society both see my story and cancer in general from their own angle.

For a long time, I thought that the only way I could fight cancer in my career was to be like my doctor, Glenson Samuel. He is an amazing man and he plays a vital role in the fight against cancer, but this is not the only way to participate in that battle. My realization of this through Relay for Life and the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society's Student of the Year campaign has led me to open my educational interests. As a photographer, I worked to make videos for the event—a skill I can use to fight cancer in the future. I want to study communications or journalism so I can, through writing and photography, educate others on the fight against cancer and its friends. This scholarship opens the door to funding that. It would also open the door to funding my exploration of other ways to become involved in the effort against cancer.

I have come to the realization that every subject in school can be used in the fight against

cancer. Math and Science of course to treat and find cures. Writing to spread awareness. History to look at the strides that have been made. Music and performance to bring comfort. Media to send a message. Being diagnosed with cancer led to my involvement in the fight against it and thus, taught me these lessons.

This scholarship would be most helpful to me because my ambitious area of study at a private college comes with a heavy monetary cost. I have been working 45 or more hours a week this summer. I want to be able to attend school without the stress of working during the school year or the looming of hefty student debt. I still have several thousand dollars to pay to attend Northwestern University. I have applied for many scholarships and this one would be such a blessing because it is one I connect with so intimately.