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## Cancer Scholarship Essay

To win a battle with no hope as to what the future holds, is survivorship; however, looking beyond the battle of this life-threatening illness, and using it as a way to carry inspiration to people around the world, is survivorship.

An honor-roll student, president of two of the biggest clubs on campus, and a violinist for over seven years, I had given up everything. I, as a senior in high school, had sacrificed everything- to win. To survive. Not, however, to prove to people I can and will survive- but to inspire them. Inspiring others that having a positive outlook on the future, regardless of what it holds, is what a survivor is.

In November 2016, I was diagnosed with Hodgkin's Lymphoma cancer, undergoing months of chemotherapy and radiation. During this time, I learned that no beauty shines brighter than that of a happy heart; I constantly found the positives in even the biggest of my worries. Thus, I continue to remind myself and others to smile and stay positive, because every day is truly a gift you have to open up and live up for. Even through all the pain, I found myself smiling and appreciating the fact that I am living to see another day. Based upon this experience, I wanted to make a difference as a survivor in the world- one step at a time.

Prior to my cancer diagnosis, I had been involved in nonprofit organizations such as Red Cross of San Diego and Project F.E.E.D. During my treatment, I had heard about the Make-A-Wish Foundation as an organization giving back to children and bringing joy in their life, and I never thought that I would one day be that wish kid and have my life changed forever. Since having my wish granted in spring 2017, I quickly became involved as a Wish It Forward program ambassador working with wish families in the office and am currently leading the Kids for Wish Kids' fundraising program at my school—all to help grant more life-affirming

wishes for kids battling critical illnesses like myself. My personal cancer journey, and the impact of my wish experience, has led me to become one of the most dedicated and youngest volunteers for Make-A-Wish® San Diego. I was selected for the 2017 Wish Kid Ambassador Award, the most inspirational youth volunteer during my first year of volunteering with the organization. I strongly believe there is often an intrinsic connection between wish kids and wish granters who experienced the power of a wish themselves; hence, as soon as I turned 18, I became an official wish granter, and teamed with one of my former wish granters to grant my first wish. In February 2018, I granted my first wish for five-year-old leukemia patient Leona, who wished for a life-sized pirate ship in her backyard. To see this little girl smile so big for the first time in months is a feeling I will never forget.

Knowing firsthand and seeing what the power of a wish can accomplish for others gives me an endless amount of joy for children with critical illnesses. A wish is not only the experience of a lifetime, but gives hope- making the impossible, possible. I am currently working on three more wishes to be granted this summer, with two of the recipients having the same diagnosis as me.

I believe I bring hope to children with childhood cancer in our community in other ways as well. I am currently involved with the American Cancer Society and serve as the survivorship chair for USD's Relay for Life event benefiting cancer research. Through this community-based event, we remember loved ones lost, honor survivors of all cancers, and raise money to help the American Cancer Society make a global impact on cancer. In hopes to be a child psychologist for children with cancer and someday the CEO of Make-A-Wish, I plan to do a double major in psychology and business administration.

Battling this life-threatening illness has taught me that the most important role a survivor can play, is one who guides others to brighter futures in life. It is my deepest wish that I continue to serve as a positive influence in my community and amongst my peers, as a survivor.