



remember tyler's smile

IN MEMORY OF TYLER BROBERG 1990-2007

August 1, 2007 was to me like every other day. I got up at the startling and awful sound of my alarm clock at 6 AM, half-dreading the run in which I would soon be participating; a long six mile run through the Simi Valley Hills with the Royal High School girls' cross country team. After the workout I hastily continued on with my day, which consisted of a few hours of babysitting for two little boys at their home. Little did I know that I would soon receive a phone call that would shake my life into a state of utter incomprehensible events. When I answered my cell phone and heard my mom's concerned voice I quickly asked her what was wrong, because she rarely called me when I was babysitting. A young friend of mine, Tyler Broberg, only sixteen, had been in a sudden accident and drowned after becoming unconscious in a pool at night. And the strange thing is that it is so easy to make a situation like this sound so much less scary than it actually is.

"What happened?" asked the two little boys after I hung up the phone. My face contorted with confusion, and further into a state of misunderstanding. Who knew it would take so little effort for me to confront these young boys with the truth in such a calm and simplifying way.

Let me tell you, when you hear something like this about a friend, you assume that they will be alright, no questions asked. I mean this boy had bright blue eyes, blonde hair, Royal High School football and water polo player, lifeguard, and yes, I won't skip over the fact that he had a truly "worked out" body. Invincible as any sixteen year old is, I must say that it's true; little do teenagers really understand about the truly rare singularity that a human life is worth. And then it hit me that he would not be okay when my mom told me he was on life support. Not like a coma where you can wake up, but a lifeless machine with a single wire was dangling this so extremely young boy between life and death. No longer was he simply in an unending sleep, but rather a true monstrosity of technology was replacing the admirable and truly free spirit Tyler had once possessed. When you come to realize and understand this, you know that this person will not be okay. And I knew that when I heard the following day he would be taken off life support that he would change many lives because of the examples he had set and the standards he had raised.

I was almost relieved that he no longer had to lay lifeless in a bed, because that was not who Tyler was. He deserved so much more than having to live off of a machine. And I was therefore almost comforted knowing that Tyler was through suffering and that his family could begin to mourn, no longer having to continue to look at him in an unresponsive state and be let down each night that he did not wake up before they went to bed. I hoped and prayed, though I am not big on God and religion in these situations, but it really was the first time that I had ever searched for someone or something bigger and better to save this young boy and his family from having to face a fate that no one should ever be forced to face.

I am not an extremely emotional person; sympathetic, yes, but emotional, no, not really. Yet, I can not even tell you how many tears I have shed over Tyler's death. And I will tell you exactly why. Not only because of his example of the genuinely kind and caring person everyone should be and the loss that the world has just experienced, but because I was sad for so many lost opportunities. The first had to do with myself, for I learned in the hardest way possible how important it can be to simply make bigger attempts at trying to form friendships with people. I was saddened by my own lost opportunity, for every time Tyler had tried to become better friends with me, I had not held out

my hand in return to make that extra effort. Secondly, I cried for his family. For his mother who would never see the day when Tyler would walk down the aisle, or the day in which she would become a grandmother to Tyler's children. I cried for his father who had lost his only son, a football and water polo player, the other man in the family. I cried for his sister, who would have to walk up her staircase everyday in an unnerving silence because no one was waiting at the top to try and trip her before she walked into her room. And lastly, I cried for Tyler. I, above all else, felt so overwhelmed when I tried to understand the reality of losing your life. To him, this meant that he would never be able to attend BYU and become a dentist. It also meant that no girl would ever be lucky enough to find Tyler as a husband. Most of all though, I think that everyone, especially someone like Tyler, would want to have known that he had left this world after having made a difference.

Just like a load of bricks crushing down on my lungs it hit me that I wanted to make his life worth something, additional to the impacts he had already made himself. I saw on August 6, 2007, over one thousand people attending his celebration of life, each of whom I knew would be ready to support an act in Tyler's name. And this is when my idea began to form because I needed to find something that would help Tyler carry on and leave a legacy in his name. I know that he would have wanted to make the world a better place.

In order to help Tyler succeed, I believe that everyone who was ever connected in some way to Tyler, anyone who knew him as the amazing person he had been on this earth, needs to become a part of this project and immerse themselves with their whole hearts. And this is how an idea is born; in moments when people need them the most. By August 1 of 2008, the anniversary of Tyler's death, a group of Royal High School students (whether from Tyler's choir class, math class, water polo team, football team), church, family members, or someone he simply knew or did not, will be involved in a project to build homes for families in partnership with Habitat for Humanity in the very town Tyler grew up, for even right here in Simi Valley, people are in need of help. It could hopefully involve everyone that Tyler loved and the people who loved him in return, as well as giving something back to the community, hopefully extending outwards with wild support in memory of Tyler's life. This program, "1 Life 2 Live," as I think it should be called, is simply a way to help Tyler leave something behind to other children who would not have had a home had it not been for this project. To raise the money for this project, wristbands engraved with "1 Life 2 Live: I Remember Tyler" such as those originally started by Lance Armstrong could hopefully begin to circulate among students, Tyler's church, and even outward into the community, which would help accomplish this venture that Tyler would surely have supported. These bracelets would create visual support of Tyler's memory and also serve as a reminder to everything that Tyler had represented and supported in life. Other merchandise and car decals will also serve as fundraising opportunities and further create support for this program. This, by the way, is not simply asking for funds as so many others do, it is simply the foundation for providing the money with which Tyler's passions can be unleashed. With these funds that would be generated at the very place where Tyler invested the most heart and time, where he experienced love, success, and his friends every single day, Simi Valley should be the place where Tyler's dreams start to become real. 1L2L emphasizes that we all have a single session of life on this earth to make changes in the world to better the lives of others. I think Tyler would be so happy to know that this program, in honor of everything he represented in life, could help children find a healthy home and environment for themselves and their families to thrive in. It would help so many children accomplish the dreams that Tyler never quite got to live out.

I want to end on a truly inspirational quotation that I really believe radiates the true essence of the potential progress a program like 1L2L can make in our country or even the world. Confucius once said, "To put the world right in order, we must first put the nation in order; to put the nation in order, we must first put the family in order; to put the family in order, we must first cultivate our personal life; we must first set our hearts right." Let us all set our hearts right in the name of Tyler Broberg's righteous example of how we should all live our lives. And now I hope that everyone is ready to make his life mean something and let generations and generations carry on the legacy of this ideal human being, who really was such a good person. I know with all my heart that he has made the difference in my life and I know that he has brought much needed revived passion for life into so many people's homes. We can all change the world and just as Confucius said, it all starts with us, one person at a time. Please do not ever think that we are so small in this world because that would do Tyler such an injustice. Let's provide homes for children which would also fulfill the second part of Confucius' quote, "...to put the nation in order, we must first put the family in order." Yes, let's create homes for children in which they can be brought up, as Tyler was, to appreciate, understand, and love life. Every person counts, but most of all, every passionate heart needs to be ready to take on all the challenges that will surely present themselves. Thank you, Tyler, for giving us all passion and even more meaning to our lives, and I hope that you can live on through this project, 1L2L, that would serve as a memorial to the life you lived.

Anne Frank, ironically enough, also died at the very young age of only sixteen years old just like Tyler. She brought meaning to so many people, changed the world, and definitely left a legacy. Tyler was also only sixteen years old when he passed away...I hope he gets the opportunity to sit down with Anne Frank wherever he is, and I am sure he would agree with Anne Frank when she said, "How wonderful it is that nobody need wait a single moment before starting to improve the world."

Written by Emilie Mateu