

We have always been told that as younger children it is your parents who have the greatest influence on your life and as we get older it is then our peers who impact our decisions and views the most. Where then does a sibling fit into this equation? When is it that your brother has the greatest impact on your life – how about a brother with Tay Sachs? For everyone the answer will probably be different, for me though, I think that my brother Keith has had more of a profound impact on my life the older I have gotten. It wasn't until recently that I even realized to what extent the role he played in influencing a lot of my decisions.

One major influence was in my choice of majors. Throughout the years I have always favored the sciences, but biology and genetics have fascinated me. In the back of my mind I know having a twin brother that suffered and succumbed to this disease makes me want advancements made for future generations and has fostered my desire to work with others towards this goal.

This summer I had the opportunity to work in Dr Seyfried's lab at Boston College and partake in Tay-Sachs research. It was a great chance to almost role-play, and see if what I had idealized as my perfect career coincided with what the actual day to day duties of working in a Tay-Sachs lab would be like. I was lucky in that I got to help out with some of the projects going on and learned a lot of techniques that I can carry forward to the future. I truly enjoyed all the time I spent in the lab, while either immersing myself in the array of literature on the disease or helping some of the great people I met in the lab with their projects. Not only did I get to participate in research, I also learned a lot more about the disease in general and was able to get a more realistic view of how the world of research/finding cures worked. I got to see firsthand the interconnected web that common

research goals create, as labs throughout the world collaborated to further the progress being made on the disease. I got a glimpse of how everything works and liked what I saw.

So when I say that I didn't realize the extent to which Keith impacted my life that is what I am referring to. I am referring to the realization that his profound impact on me was giving me the desire to do research. His impact on me was that while I could keep looking back onto the past and grieve for what could have been – or I could push forward and join others in the fight for the cure. This summer provided me with the unique opportunity to reflect on the profound impact of the disease, as it takes a life at such a young age, as well as the excitement of research being done to further the medical communities knowledge of the disease. While Keith's impact may have been less noticeable when I was younger, it has manifested itself as a sense of purpose and a goal – to participate and contribute to the cutting edge research going on now.