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October 2012

Even today, almost 10 years after his death, I think about my brother George every single day. George has impacted my life in more ways than one and even though he is no longer physically with us, he still continues to do so each day as I grow older. Growing up with a sibling with Tay-Sachs is rare- something that many don't experience. Instead of looking back on it in a negative light, I choose to do the opposite. I choose to look back on my experience grateful for everything that I have learned from George and even more grateful for the years I had with him.

When my parents brought George home from the hospital, I knew I would be the best big sister there ever was. I was 6 years old and he was the cutest baby I had ever seen. You couldn't look at him without pinching his chubby cheeks and he would have everyone in the room laughing along with him when he chuckled. When I learned that he had a rare disease, I'm not quite sure I fully understood. I would come home from school and tell George everything that had happened that day. He loved the Jacuzzi and the pool. When we put on *Somewhere Over the Rainbow*, his favorite song, his face would light up. These are the memories I like to think about most.

When my brother was diagnosed, there was nothing in my power to help him or to help my family deal with their sorrows. I always said I would make something of myself. I would never take life for granted and I would benefit others in the world because I had to make up for two people. I am continuously dealing with George's death, even now, and always remembering how he has impacted my family and I.

My friends loved George as if he were their own brother. They would offer to help with the suction machine, hold up his feeding tube, and sit with him just to talk. This life has been all I've ever known. In middle school, my worst fear wasn't being rejected by a cute boy, or having my face break out. My worst fear was my brother being taken from me, and in 7<sup>th</sup> grade, that day did come. At first, I wouldn't accept it. I pretended I was fine and I would get through it. Although I did get through it, I learned many things that will forever stay with me.

George has taught me that not one single day is guaranteed. Life is something that should be celebrated, something that should be cherished, because we are so lucky to be living it. At times, I get caught up in silly things, like every 21 year old does. I'm stressed about money- about my future career. Then I stop and think. I'm alive, I'm healthy and I'm capable. What am I whining about? I appreciate life in a way that I know most people don't. Things that seem like a big deal-they just aren't. Every day is a gift that isn't promised the next day or even the next minute. This is what George has taught me.

Because of my view on life, I don't think I will ever be happy at a desk job making money so I can buy a house and groceries. I want to live with a purpose. I want to make a difference in others lives, I want to do something and be something. This is why I have had so much trouble in deciding my career path- but life is about the ride, not the destination. I'm not worried. I have an amazing family and amazing friends. I know I will do something worthwhile in this world, I know George would want me to.

I am here and I am lucky enough to be healthy. My determination to impact the world every day remains and I truly believe I will have a positive influence on others.