

Abbvie Scholarship Presentation

- Sarena S.



April 19th, 2006 was when my 19 year older mother gave birth to me. During that time, no one knew I had Cystic Fibrosis. I was born in a specialized hospital out of town because the doctors suspected something to be wrong but were not sure exactly what it was. For the first 3-4 weeks, I was extremely sick. I vomited up everything I ate and wasn't able to gain weight. Around one month later, I was diagnosed with Cystic Fibrosis. Once I was diagnosed, there were many challenges I faced. Trying to find medications that worked, that I didn't throw up or have a reaction to, and trying to stay out of the hospital due to my illness. Being a newborn and having all these issues was a major responsibility for my mom, who was only 19, a single mother, and was juggling a full-time job and college.





I'm glad I don't remember my first year, it sounded pretty rough. My pulmonologist even said it herself, she wasn't sure I was going to survive. As I progressed into elementary school, I was stable, but definitely not out of the clear. At least once a year, I was in the hospital for temporary IV lines to treat lung infections or having surgeries for sinus issues. I even had a feeding tube for 10 years. My resilience has been challenged as I have gotten older as new health issues continue to arise while the old issues linger. Twice, I ended up in the hospital with bowel obstructions, one requiring a major surgery. I also developed kidney stones regularly. I will forever struggle with lung infections, chronic sinus problems and keeping my weight up and ultimately I have experienced a decrease in lung function. But despite battling my illness, I have pursued to fight through these struggles and feel I am in a healthy, thriving state.



Lol

Growing up and having all these health issues has made me aware of how crucial physical activity is for the body and, more specifically, the lungs. I became interested in gymnastics in elementary school and joined a local gymnastics team. I did this for several years and had the wonderful experience of competing competitively. Eventually, I decided to persue other interests. In middle school, I focused more on the band, where I played the flute, which is notorious for being good for your lungs. I partook in the band for six years until I reached high school and finally decided to try something new again. This is where I found my passion: Tennis. I joined the team during the first year of Covid. I was one of seven girls on the team. I have been on varsity for all four years of high school and have had a fantastic time with my friends and the memories we have made. With fitness being such a significant and enjoyable part of my life, I have also taken it upon myself to join a local gym and work out multiple times a week and recently developed a liking for soccer. As I get older, I plan on continuing to incorporate fitness into my life and experiencing new and exciting things to keep myself healthy.



Even though I am highly passionate about sports and physical activity, I am genuinely passionate about my career goals and aspirations. Growing up and having Cystic Fibrosis, one thing I have noticed not only with my family but all of my doctors as well is their want to help and take care of people. That is something I have admired my whole life and a beautiful quality I have gained from them. During my High School career, I discovered an interest in Law. I plan on attending UConn in the fall and majoring in Psychology while obtaining a neuroscience minor. I am interested in the human mind and applying my knowledge to help solve cases. With this degree, I plan on attending law school to get a JD. I want to give back to my community and the people who helped me get here today by helping serve justice in a court of law.

A Thanks to my family

