

Hallie Baer

8th grade

Maple

School

Teachers come in many different forms, but my favorites are the ones who taught me more than workbooks and equations ever did—they showed me who I should strive to be. My twin brother, Philly, was one of these people. He taught me to pursue excellence, and overall, to be responsible. Two factors, however, shine a new light on him: he had severe special needs and passed away on New Year's Day.

Philly was a wheelchair user and had vibrant blue eyes. His light brown hair grew straight up like grass, and he always had a smile on his face despite having microcephaly, scoliosis, pontocerebellar hypoplasia, terrible hearing, the inability to talk and walk, and other obstacles.

Philly always pursued excellence and felt responsible to be the best he could be. He beat the odds when he lived twelve and a half years past his life expectancy of one year. He learned how to walk despite his terrible feet that were blue due to problems of the circulatory system. He also rode his bike in places like Northbrook Court and Old Orchard. Although everyone thought he wouldn't be able to eat, he loved eating everything, especially grilled cheese. He even used an eye gaze machine to tell people about himself and what he wanted. He always participated in and loved therapies, even when he was sick. In both good and bad times, Philly fulfilled his one major responsibility: to be the best he could be. If he had not done so, he would have been dead at the age of one or been not just a wheelchair user, but wheelchair bound. He proved to me the significance of responsibility and pursuit of excellence, and that if I have these qualities, I will succeed like he did.

Overall, Philly taught me to "Shoot for the moon" because "Even if you miss it you will land among the stars." He taught me that when having responsibility, there is nothing to lose. More importantly, there is always something to gain.