

***What does Family mean to you and how has it helped you understand differences that exist in the world today and empower you to be an active participant in changing your community for the better?***

Sometimes I used to think about why we are here.

What am I meant to do with my time preparing for the variables of joy and disappointment that face me at 19 years old? My life seemed to be at the will of the insurmountably massive universe as I started my second college semester. The first day of my second college semester back at Pitt was when my little sister Sophia was diagnosed with Kostmann's syndrome. Why I was on this earth no longer mattered, it only mattered that Sophia stayed here. Sophia was rushed to Hershey Hospital in extensive pain after having flu symptoms for days and entered cardiac arrest shortly after her arrival. After almost nine minutes of no heartbeat, Sophia was finally resuscitated. Sophia was heavily medicated to aid her in her recovery during her time at the hospital. Weeks bled into months, I became unfocused and more upset daily as I became angry at everything. The bacteria in her bloodstream, the people around me, and the world that didn't stop because my sister was ill.

My time during my spring semester was spent in enforced quarantine at Pitt. I was only allowed to see my friends in my building, only allowed to leave for absolute necessity. Meanwhile, Sophia's condition stabilized, and she was finally able to speak again. During facetime calls, she would tell me about her pain, how the hospital was unbearable, and mom would tell me Sophia sometimes felt as if nobody was on her team. I was determined to reverse this last statement. To build Sophia's team as large as I could. I collected all the friends I could possibly find from my social media, classes, and extracurricular activities to add to Sophia's team. I asked for a simple submission of a video message encouraging Sophia that was then transferred to my mother, who would play the videos at the hospital for Sophia. Sophia enjoyed the videos but still struggled physically through every day and night at the hospital. Sophia was kept afloat by the encouragement she received through the videos sent to her, comments on social media, the unending love of my mom, and zoom calls with our entire family. Our friends and community showed their support through letters, meals, help cleaning the house while mom was away for months, gifts, and the most minor words helped me battle my ADHD and Online classes for my GPA. Although the role of community played a large part in my personal goals during this time, without my family I would have been lost. Daily calls with my mom and dad kept me afloat and kept the hope I had for myself alive. My family grounded me during this time, and I realized we are put on this earth to help each other to the other side. Life is difficult. Finding meaning is complex. But we can help ease the burden of others around us by any minor or grand gesture.

To help others to the other side, my time at Pitt has been spent as an active participant in the National Alliance on Mental Illness club, Free The Planet student environmental organization, and Panther Equity. Through these organizations, I have expanded my opportunity for easing the burden put on college students mentally, aiding the world to recover environmentally, and aiding other business majors with studying in their classes. As a participant in the National Alliance on Mental Illness club (NAMI), I have raised awareness of mental health topics and broken mental health stigma on and off-campus. NAMI events have enabled me to aid others who are also experiencing mental health issues due to the pandemic and otherwise. NAMI event fundraisers assist directly in helping those who are mentally ill get in touch with crisis counselors and get the aid they need. At the Free The Planet student environmental organization, students like myself can work on campus and in the community to foster awareness about critical environmental issues while taking action to resolve them. Free the planet works with

organizations and the university itself to instill real ecological change in university policies. At Panther Equity, I have the unique ability to connect and network with other business majors. During my time at Pitt, I have started a "Groupme" class discussion group chat for each class where I share homework guides, exam review sheets, and helpful excel models I personally create based on class material to aid in student understanding. Over 230 students benefit from these student group chats and the materials I make. Panther equity allows me to check on and network with these students who I help study while providing extensive finance knowledge of complex models like discounted cash flow valuation. My degree puts me in a great position to continue helping other people in the business world.

I plan to use my degree in Finance and Quantitative analysis to provide the necessary tools to the world to ease the journey to the other side on the most significant scale possible and offer a hand up to those who have been knocked down like my family through providing financial services to nonprofit organizations. Nonprofits like Make-a-Wish and the Milton S Hershey Medical Center were the institutions keeping my sister alive and hopeful during her struggle with Kostmann's syndrome. The business world has a direct relation to hospital care and aid given to individuals like my sister. Allocating funds, conducting accounting, using complex models to forecast data, and financial management are essential functions of nonprofit work. Because of nonprofit efficiency through business, my sister is finally home walking again independently after 10 months of recovery, looking forward to her future. I aim to put children like my sister back on their feet by working for nonprofits, and I believe that with this scholarship, I can help those in need like my family on the largest scale possible.