

Heroes can come from all walks of life. A hero can come in the form of an older brother or sister, a parent, a friend, a military or law enforcement person or medical worker; to name a few. I have been fortunate to have all of the above in my life. I grew up the youngest of seven children; two older brothers and four older sisters. I was able to experience not only positive events from them but also their friends. Honestly, being the youngest has many perks!

My siblings all graduated from St. Lawrence. They all participated in a variety of sports. I was always the tag along little brother. Saturday's in the winter were mainly spent in the St. Lawrence gym. I have fond recollections of hanging out with many of the younger siblings. One of those younger siblings was Ryan Tsatsos. He was always so kind and inclusive and played with me on those Saturday's. It didn't matter that I didn't attend St. Lawrence, he made sure I was part of the group. I would look forward to Saturday's with Ryan whether it be kicking around a foil ball or playing some type of floor hockey or basketball with it. Our season transitioned into spring sports where both of our older brothers played lacrosse. We once again found ourselves hanging out and playing games. I remember bringing my mini lacrosse stick and we would throw the lacrosse ball back and forth the whole game. He was always so kind and never made me feel like 'the little brother.' He just smiled and gave so freely of his time. That is a good kind of hero to have in your life; expecting nothing in return.

I have been able to extend myself to others as well. In 1st grade, I had a classmate of mine get diagnosed with brain cancer. She was a very special girl with a great smile and contagious laugh. That was also the year my dad and I decided to participate in the St Baldrick's Romeo event. Participants sign up to shave their heads and get donations to do so. The money goes exclusively towards finding a cure for childhood cancers. I can remember as Summer's diagnosis progressed, she would come to school in a wheelchair. I would push her around, sometimes a bit fast, saying 'Get out of the way, girl with cancer coming through.' We would laugh uncontrollably, mostly at the absurdness of the remarks. I think she enjoyed our wheelchair rides around school as much as I did. I also hope I was able to give her a short time to not think about cancer. I ended up losing my friend Summer in 4th grade. It was a very difficult time for all of us. I ended up continuing shaving my head and raising money for childhood cancer research for 10 years total! I was able to raise over \$20,000 for childhood cancer research. I was sad when covid happened for so many reasons, but none compare to the fact that I broke my 10 year streak because they had to cancel the annual event in town! My mom recently reached out to Summer's mom; as she does from time to time just to check in on her. We were happy to hear that Romeo High School will be post-humously giving Summer her Romeo diploma. It will be good to see her mom again. For so many years she would come up to where the heads were shaved(it's a pretty big deal in Romeo) and make a point to watch me get my head shaved. She reminds me always that Summer looked to me as a good friend. She has also teased that Summer used to write my name all over her notebook. Heroes sometimes are big sports players or people in various forms of media. But the very best heroes are the ones we come in contact with every day.

Thank you for taking the time to read my essay; sometimes it feels good to tell a good story even though there are bumps along the way. I look forward to hearing from you.