



Manulife Life Lessons Scholarship Program – Tylar’s Story

Transcript

Hi, my name is Tylar Strauss. I'm 17 years old and currently in my final year of high school. Since receiving offers of admissions from multiple Ontario universities this winter, I've been working hard in an effort to begin my journey of pursuing an undergraduate degree.

Unlike other scholarships, the Manulife Life Lessons Scholarship has offered me an opportunity to share my story, which I'm very grateful for. In 2008, my mother was diagnosed with breast cancer. Before my mom's diagnosis, she was strong, fit, smart and healthy. She and my dad did everything they could to help her win the fight. Chemotherapy, experimental drugs and naturopathic remedies.

In 2009, after just a couple of months in remission, the cancer came back and had spread. My mom spent the next three years fighting a losing battle. Not long after her 42nd birthday, in the spring of 2011, the second round of invasive breast cancer took her life. At this time, I was just four years old.

This tragic loss was devastating for my father and I. The years leading up to my mom's death were exhausting for my dad. He cared for her and I while balancing a full-time job with an irregular work schedule. At the time of my mom's death, his employer was unable to accommodate a flexible work schedule, so my dad, now a single widower with a four-year-old daughter, was forced out of a job.

My dad had to figure out how to best raise me on his own, but the financial burden of losing my mom was profound. Not only did he no longer have a secure paycheck, but he had also spent most of their savings trying to save her, by investing in experimental drugs and financing trips to the hospital for treatment.

Then there were funeral costs, childcare expenses, and extensive grief therapies that are ongoing. The conversation about life insurance came up a lot for my dad in those years following my mom's death. He and my mom completed the paperwork for a life insurance policy with Manulife, but they decided to hold off. Then my mom was diagnosed, which deemed her ineligible. So, only my dad could get coverage.

Part of my journey has been overcoming the fear that something bad will happen to my dad. I struggle with anxiety and put a lot of pressure on myself to succeed. I also feel a great responsibility to be successful. I intend on working in the summers to help pay for school, but receiving this scholarship would allow me to accept the offer of my choice, live in residence, and focus solely on my studies without the added stress of having to bring in an income.



Had my mom had life insurance, my dad would have the sufficient savings to cover the cost of a university education for me, and a plan in place for his own retirement.

If I am selected as a recipient of this scholarship, I will be very thankful to Manulife as the provider who gave back when I needed it the most. Receiving this scholarship would honour my mother, who was a loving wife, mother, twin sister and friend, and place value in both of our lives.

I'm excited for this next chapter of my life and thank you for allowing me the opportunity to share my story with you.