

The gold sixteen inch chain that hangs around my neck rarely comes off. I had never worn a piece of gold jewelry a day in my life, until this was given to me by someone special. The little angel that dangles from the chain symbolizes him watching over me, his strength, his empowerment, his kind heart. I was more than thankful when this necklace was given to me, and I promised Tyler's father that I would cherish it with everything I have.

Kids in high school feel that they are invincible; that nothing can ever happen to them or to those around them. I, too, felt this way; the thought of someone close to me dying was the furthest thing from my mind. On July 7, 2011, the summer going into my junior year of high school, a very close friend, and classmate of mine, suddenly passed away. This had a profound effect on me. Tyler was not just another kid in my class, he was the glue that kept our class close together; he had a warm heart and always knew how to make someone smile.

When there is a death of an older relative, people tend to think, "they lived a long and happy life", or "they were really sick and it was their time to go". But what about Tyler? He was 17 years old when he passed away; he never got to experience life. We all say that there is always another time to experience something, but maybe there isn't. People take advantage of the life they have been given; food, water, shelter, clothes, money. These contributions don't make up a life; a life makes up these contributions. This is what I believe.

Tyler impacted my life in ways I did not see until now. I learned to never give up and to keep trying until I reach my goals; I learned that laughter is the medicine of life; and I learned that I need to stay strong through the toughest of times. I was grateful enough to receive a gold necklace of Tyler's that his father wanted me to have. I wear his necklace around my neck every day and every night because it is a symbol of his strength, and a symbol of his passion.