

“Lean on me, when you're not strong, and I'll be your friend. I'll help you carry on”, were the lyrics she had always loved to sing from the man she worshiped: Michael Bolton. He was her serenade, what kept her going through all of those days. She believed that because of his music she could live life thoroughly and find its meaning. She found a way to see the good in every situation, even though it was not always the best of state. She allowed her self to seek forgiveness, even when it was not deserved. Through the unraveling of each of these words, my cousin’s optimistic outlook on life was always so treacherous due to the abnormality of her condition.

Growing up her whole life diagnosed with Leukemia and being blind, she was never able to see how egotistical this world portrayed to be. Instead, she emerged her fanciful thoughts that love circled around everything, as it should, and that everyone was meaningful in their own distinct way to the minds of those around her. She did not deserve the pain she went through each and every day, which caused my family much grief and stress. They always questioned the ruling of God, and why it had to be them to undergo this unfortunate state. They too were very loving people, their last name, Loveridge, was enough proof. The joy that their daughter brought to them always brought life to our family.

As I passed through the stages of my childhood, and from the closeness my aunt and dad shared, I always found my cousin Carrie Loveridge to be the only one by my side. We became best friends, submerged in happiness when side-by-side. I too started to share the same joy that the soothing music of Michael Bolton brought. When joining the Make-A-Wish foundation, my cousin always said from the beginning that her wish was to meet and enjoy one of Michael Bolton’s concerts. It

was not until the age of 17, just 7 months before her unfortunate passing, was her wish granted. When hearing the news, I was overwhelmed with joy that my cousin finally was about to escape in the midst of her dreams.

The whole night turned out to be all that it deserved. With our formal dresses, and the men in their suits and ties, the black limo arrived with the sign “The Loveridge family” sitting in the window. We all piled in, all sharing the hopes that this night would turn out to be fairytale like and exceed the world’s judgments. We all wanted Carrie to forget her pain for the night and just drown in the moment. And that is exactly what she did. She fully submerged herself in the music as if she were the only one in the room. The smile on her face was the size of a crescent moon and she danced as if not one person were watching. It was just she, there at that moment, and no other situation could have mattered to her. After the concert was over, we all believed there was no way this night could get any better for her, as it turned out we were wrong. The co founder of Make-A-Wish accompanied us that night and informed us that we were actually going to be able to go backstage and meet her one and only. When conversation with him lasted for more than an hour, Carrie quickly climbed to the top of the world. She loved each and every minute and took in each and every word that he placed upon her.

When time came to go home, we could see her light of happiness shining from miles away. She whispered to me, “ if I were to die at this very instance, I would be extremely contempt with it.” Accompanying her that night, and feeling the many wonders that Make-A-Wish allowed my family to enjoy, it hit me straight across the face that I wanted to help other people with similar conditions as my

cousin, have a chance to embark in one moment to change their whole life. I that night found my calling in life, I wanted to help others and be an inspiration to many.

Going home the next day, I quickly jumped on my new discovery. I joined every organization I heard of; Give Kids the world, The Salvation Army, Special Olympics and many others. I volunteered for every opportunity available and always made sure to personally share memories with every family I was embraced by, knowing that through listening and positive thinking I could help change someone's day. Not only did I use this mindset to help others with needs at charity events, I also practiced the same thinking when going to work at Universal Studios. I always tried to make each and every guest that I interacted with feel special and fully enjoy his or her vacation and much needed happiness. Also, coming to college this year as a freshman, I have extended my want to help others by joining the best buddies, habitat humanities and invisible children organizations to continue helping people with unfortunate conditions enjoy their time on this precious earth.

Not only when working with charities have I followed this outlook that I possess, but also around my friends and family I always try to motivate them into wanting to do good in school as it will contribute to their future and also to not place judgments on anyone as they do not know the conditions that they might be involved with. I find joy myself in knowing that I can help motivate and inspire other and I owe it all to my cousin. Carrie inspired me to shape my view of this world and to help others.

