

Thank you all for attending tonight's event, as we take on the challenge of conquering cancer. I would especially like to thank Tara for asking me to speak tonight and all her hard work to make tonight possible. Cancer is a word that brings many different emotions for me. I lost my aunt, my grandmother, my grandfather and many friends to cancer. And on February 18th 2013, I began my own battle with cancer. That battle became a little easier last summer when I met Tara.

I was asked by The Jimmy Fund to speak at a pacesetter event that was hosted at Fenway Park in July of last year. After I spoke, two women came up to me. They turned out to be Tara and Amy. They were both so excited to hear my story and tell me about their fundraising team. Tara told me how she was a breast cancer survivor and that this year their team was donating half of the money her team earned to lung cancer. Then she told me they were hoping to donate over 50,000 dollars! By the way, Team Tara exceeded that and donated over 65,000 dollars!

I didn't really know what to say. When I asked her why she chose lung cancer, she told me she knew that lung cancer was one of the lowest funded cancers. I knew she was someone special, but also someone that understood what this is all about. We briefly swapped information that night and we and enjoyed a night of Red Sox baseball. All I could think of that entire night was the fact that Tara was so motivated to raise money for a cancer she had never even battled. She understood that my cancer didn't begin with smoking, in fact, she knew that many lung cancer patients don't even smoke.

Which brings me to my next point. Three and a half years ago, at the age of 22, I was diagnosed with stage 4 lung cancer. It was December of 2012 and I couldn't shake my cold. I went to the doctor's office multiple times. They tried different types of medications, they told me my asthma was just flaring up. And yet I just seemed to just get progressively worse. I was at work one night and I went to climb a large flight of stairs. By the time I got to the top I was so winded and light headed I thought I was going to pass out. Little did I know I was breathing at less than half my lung capacity at the time.

After some blood tests and much fatigue, the doctors thought they had an answer: Lyme disease. I began treatment for Lyme. But after I felt even worse, I

called the hospital and asked to have a chest x-ray. It just didn't seem right. I was an active 22 year old, nonsmoker, and couldn't even walk up a flight of stairs.

After my x-ray they sent me on my way. Less than an hour later, the doctor called and said, "You need to come in to the office first thing in the morning, we want to discuss your x-ray." My heart sank, but I had absolutely no idea what was to come. The next day, my local doctor showed me the x-ray of my lungs and my whole body went numb. They were completely white. It was like someone had filled my lungs with sand. My doctor without knowing my age, expected from reading my scans that I was in my 80's, on oxygen, in a hospital bed. The local doctors didn't have an answer for me right away; only that more tests needed to be done and I didn't have Lyme disease. They highly recommended that I stop working. After months of tests, biopsies and various scans we finally figured out my lungs were full of tumors. But that's all we knew. The local hospital couldn't come up with an answer.

In February, the biopsies were finally sent to Dana Farber for analysis. My doctor called me into the office and suggested I bring my family members. My pulmonologist sat us down in his room and gave us the news. "Cancer." But "How?" My family and I had just entered a long grieving process that comes with a cancer diagnosis, and I had to call my girlfriend of 3 months and tell her that I had cancer.

Soon after, I had a referral to Dana-Farber Cancer Institute. Being from Maine, my first time in a Boston hospital was extremely overwhelming. We met with the oncologist and he looked over my scans and asked, "How you are not on oxygen?" We discussed some things but it looked grim. I was diagnosed with Stage 4A non-small cell lung cancer. He said my best chance to treat this was to get another biopsy done in order to get a tissue sample of my cancer, to look for genetic mutations. I knew what I had was serious and it was time to either fight like hell, or get my affairs in order.

We traveled back down to Boston for my open lung biopsy and since I was so sick to begin with, it really knocked me off my feet. A couple weeks later we got the call to come back down and start chemotherapy. We had just met with my oncologist and he said they hadn't got the genetic testing back, but we needed to start chemotherapy. Not the answer I was looking for. I was just getting ready to go down to have my port put in to receive the chemo, when they called me back

up to my oncologist office. GOOD NEWS! The genetic testing showed that I have an ALK mutation, which leads to a form of cancer that is found in 4% of lung cancer patients and is usually found in younger nonsmokers. There are a lot of targeted therapies out there for this very specific mutation so this was HUGE.

I was given HOPE for life again. I started a clinical trial within a week. Between traveling from Maine to Boston and starting my new treatment, my doctors could tell I was starting to get worn out. That's how I first got involved with the Jimmy Fund. They appointed me a social worker and she came to visit me and said, "How about a fun night in Boston?" and handed me two tickets behind home plate to that Friday's game, compliments of the Jimmy Fund. For that one night, Boston wasn't full of anxiety. It couldn't have come at a better time for my girlfriend and me as well.

The clinical trial started going great. My 6 week scan showed almost an 80% reduction in tumors in my lungs. I was finally able to continue my active lifestyle and not struggle to catch my breath. I continued to try and wrap my head around my diagnosis and live a new normal.

I was asked to be a part of the Jimmy Fund Telethon at Fenway Park that year. This was going to be my first time going public about my cancer diagnosis. Being diagnosed with lung cancer at a young age isn't easy and the first question most people ask is, "Did you smoke?" So I decided if more people heard my story maybe I could change the stigma against lung cancer. There are so many different factors that can cause lung cancer. After going on the air to tell a little about myself during the telethon, the feedback I received was incredible. That's when I knew I wanted to be an advocate for Lung Cancer. And I wanted to give back to the Jimmy Fund, for all they have done for me and so many others.

Later that month The Jimmy Fund asked if I would share my story during the 7TH inning with Jenny Dell, and I was asked to throw out the first pitch that night at Fenway Park. I'm pretty sure I said yes to before they even finished their sentence. Being a New England sports fan, who doesn't dream of taking the mound at Fenway Park? The more I got involved with the Jimmy Fund the more I realized how special this Foundation really is.

My second year with the Jimmy Fund they had approached me about being a part of the Jimmy Fund Walk. We already had prior commitments and I wasn't able to

attend. But I said count me in next year. The winter after the Jimmy Fund walk they asked me if I would be a Jimmy Fund Walk Hero. People who have participated in the walk know how special the walk heroes are, they have heroes for every mile of the event, with a sign and a quote, that gives every walker a sense of gratitude knowing every dollar raised is benefiting those who need it most. I feel like the heroes are such huge part during the walk **and I loved seeing them in the hallway tonight!** Many walkers stop at each sign to read about them. It gives them the motivation to not only continue walking but to continue fundraising.

In June 2015, just a year ago, the Jimmy Fund invited Michelle (my girlfriend of 3 years) and I to the Hero Match Party to get to know other heroes and their families. It was a great day spent with others swapping stories about our journeys, and all that the Jimmy Fund has done for us. I had told some of the staff that Michelle and I were heading down to the Red Sox game that evening. They pulled me aside and asked if I wanted upgraded tickets to box seats. That's when I told them I was proposing at Fenway that night. After many nerves and lots of cheers, she said yes. The staff all sent me a card the next week and congratulated me on my engagement. Those are the things that make me so happy to be a part of such a special foundation. Whether they are on the Jimmy Fund Staff or a volunteer, these amazing people genuinely care about my life. During such a tough time, it is wonderful to feel the love of the people around you.

In September, I couldn't wait for the day of the walk. It really is an amazing experience being apart of and seeing everyone come together. Some only walk a few miles and some walk all 26.2, but I went and stood by my sign. So many people stopped and wished me luck and genuinely cared about me. The Jimmy Fund Walk isn't something you do once. It becomes a part of you every year.

After last year's walk, Michelle and I still kept in contact with many people from the Jimmy Fund. We see them at events such as this one, and find that these people are some of the most generous and supportive people we know.

In February of this year, three years to the day of my diagnosis, we entered a 100,000 dollar wedding giveaway contest. We submitted a story about ourselves and why we wanted to get married in York, Maine. The contest was based on public and vendor votes. It was a competitive contest. So we shared it with the Jimmy Fund who shared it with everyone they knew, who then shared it with

everyone they knew. We were about 3 weeks into the contest when we attended the Jimmy Fund Extra Mile brunch. We walked in and it felt like everyone there had seen our video. It was so awesome to see the Jimmy Fund come together and help us out for something that that meant so much to us. With the support of everyone I'm happy to say Michelle and I won the contest, and will tie the knot on October 21st!

If I have learned anything about life during my on-going journey it's that a positive mind-set and spirit is part of the healing process. Please know that every dollar donated to this event tonight, and every dollar raised everywhere for cancer benefits a patient in some way and improves their life. I still fight my battle every day and need advanced medical research to help me fight. Thanks to the generous donations to fund cancer research, I have been able to participate in 2 different clinical trials that have helped me get to where I am today.

In closing, I can't thank you enough for attending this amazing event and sharing your night with me. You are the real heroes as you share your stories, laughter and funds to help cancer research and the Jimmy Fund.