

# Transformation

## Inspired by Women's Literature

Honestly, I was never one who loved to read. I can't sit still very easily. Many people love to curl up with a book on a rainy day, but that's not me. I rather go for a run. I would say that this is still true about me. I can't sit still. However, I have found to appreciate literature, and four years later I can say that I have read more books that I ever would have imagined. Even though I am super energetic and always seem to be on the go, with my new appreciation of literature I can now find time during the day or at night before bed to read and truly be inspired.

Students need to take a literature course at Fontbonne to fulfill general education requirements; so, during my freshman year I enrolled in Women's Literature. The professor of this course, Dr. Oliverio, completely transformed the way I think about literature. This was definitely one of my favorite classes I took at Fontbonne, and it was a class I didn't even think I would like. I honestly thought it was a class that would stress me out with all the reading. I am a slow reader, and sometimes I get lost in the story and I don't understand what's going on. But that didn't happen to me in this class.

One of the reasons this course unexpectedly excited me was through the passion Dr. Oliverio showed while teaching. She clearly felt something with these books. She had so much passion for the literature she was teaching, it was impossible for me not to feel it with her. Because I loved this teacher so much, I took another one of her courses during spring semester of my senior year. It didn't fulfill a requirement, and I didn't even need any more electives. I just enjoyed the literature, and the professor. Dr. Oliverio also does not make class stressful. Class is actually enjoyable. This is so important.

I was introduced to dystopian literature during women's lit my freshman year, and I absolutely fell in love with it. Dystopian literature is "an imagined world or society in which people lead wretched, dehumanized, fearful lives." (Merriam-Webster Dictionary) I wouldn't describe myself as someone who enjoys anything creepy, but apparently in literature I do. We read Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaids Tale* which is now my favorite book:

Imagine a society where a woman is simply there to carry a baby, give birth to that baby, and then never see the child again. This is the life of Offred, the handmaid, and narrator of the story in Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*. Offred was not even her real name, but as a handmaid it was forbidden to use her real name. "I want to be held and told my name. I want to be valued, in ways that I am not; I want to be more than valuable. I repeat my former name; remind myself of what I once could do, how others saw me. I want to steal something." (97, Atwood) Set in 1985 in New England, during an era of environmental pollution and radiation, there was a decline in birth rate and an increase in infertility due to these factors. Offred was one of few women with a healthy reproductive system, thus she was forced to produce children. "Anyways, they're doing it for us all, said Cora, or so they say. If I hadn't of got my tubes tied, it could have been me, say I was ten years younger. It's not that bad. It's not what you'd call hard work." (10, Atwood) There is lack of respect between Marthas and Handmaids. Marthas are maids that do housework; Handmaids are pressured to have children. This comment by Cora makes it sound like Handmaids have it easy but the pressure to have a child and then be torn apart from that child is emotionally stressful. This text defines women as simply "baby makers" whose sole responsibility is to produce children during a time when the infertility rate is high.

One of the major themes in Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaids Tale* is identity. You realize how important your identity as a human in a society is when you read a story where

everyone's identity is hidden. Everyone in the *The Handmaid's Tale* has been renamed, and every woman is placed into a category: handmaid, wife, Martha, or Econowife. No one is represented by their real name. What a women's body can do (aka make babies) is more important than a women's personality. These women, like Offred can't be themselves. They don't have freedom. It has made me realize how important it is to be myself, and not be like anyone else. I have the option to be me, and why not let that soar. At Fontbonne I have been allowed to be exactly who I want to be, and I have loved that.

#### References:

- Merriam-Webster. (n.d.). *Dystopia definition & meaning*. Merriam-Webster. Retrieved February 18, 2022, from <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/dystopia>
- Atwood, Margaret, 1939-. *The Handmaid's Tale*. Toronto :McClelland and Stewart, 1985. Print.

Survived my first year of college!



My first year of college was not a walk in the park. I was panicked to start college. My twin JJ had just left for New York to start his freshman year at NYU, and this was

the first time we were ever apart. JJ and I are extremely close. He is the most caring, loving, and kind person you will ever meet, and to see him leave was painful. I knew I could go visit him whenever I wanted, but it wasn't the same as living together. College got off to a great start for me; I surprised myself. I made friends, got good grades, made it to the Dean's List, and became a TELOS scholar, as well as a member of ALD.

My family has traveled a lot across the United States and the world; however, I never went on a trip that was just specifically for me. My mom has always understood me the best of any person and for my birthday that year (the first birthday I spent away from my twin) she surprised with a trip. A trip to Hawaii! It was a gift for completing my first year of college. This transformed me. Completing my first year of college was a big deal for me. I knew it was a great accomplishment, but I didn't realize how much my mom thought it was a great accomplishment until she gifted me with a mother/daughter trip to Hawaii. I felt special in a way I had not ever felt before. I knew I was in the right school for myself. Actually, the perfect school for myself.

My mom and I traveled to Honolulu, Oahu, for five days. We went on amazing hikes, swam with dolphins, and snorkeled with sea turtles. We didn't really "relax," because when I travel to a new place, I can't just sit on the beach. I want to experience everything I possibly can. My mom would have been happy to sit on the beach, but this was a trip for me, and she was happy to run around with me.

One of the things that my parents are great at is making each one of me and my siblings feel special. I think it can be hard when you have four kids, very close in age, but my parents raised all four of us to be different, and to be ourselves. Hawaii made me realize that what my mom saw in me was more than what I saw in myself. She was so proud of me for completing my first year of college. This trip was just one of the many ways my parents make me feel special.

# Exploration

## Bridal Gown History Project

Being a part of the TELOS honors program at Fontbonne means students have extra work and responsibilities. We are allowed to explore deeper into classes that interest us. In the Fall of 2019, I was taking FAS 308 Dress & History. I absolutely loved this course! I never saw myself as a history buff but learning the history of dress was definitely one of my favorite classes I took at Fontbonne. Being a part of TELOS means that each student needs to “contract” at least one course into an honors course. Contracting a course means we meet with both the professor of the course, and our TELOS advisor, and agree upon a project that allows the student to explore deeper into the course curriculum. I decided to do this with FAS 308 Dress & History, and I specifically studied the history of bridal fashion, Mesopotamia to present.

After I completed my research, I wrote a ten-page research paper and created a PowerPoint with visuals. I presented this to the FAS 308 class at the end of the semester, and I also presented this presentation during the academic showcase at the end of the Spring 2021 semester. This project enabled me to explore deeper into a topic that was personally interesting to me and being a part of TELOS allowed me to do that. I was able to explore something about myself that I never knew about myself, that was learning history. I know some people love history, and I definitely don’t want to offend anyone who loves learning about history. My younger brother loves learning history. We all need people like that in our lives. But for me personally, history was not my favorite topic in school. However, I realized that studying dress history, and the history of fashion was right up my alley.

This course was definitely a challenge; it was not easy. I memorized names of garments from centuries ago which was interesting, yet hard because the garments had unusual names, and

words I have never heard of before. My favorite part of this course was learning about different countries and dress styles from past centuries. I have traveled several times to the Middle East; learning about Egyptian dress was my favorite because it was something I felt like I had seen in real life. I loved learning about the Byzantine Empire as well. The jewels that have been collected from that era are gorgeous.

I have always loved bridal. I have done many different projects about bridal over my four years at Fontbonne. If I ever had a choice about a topic I could research, it was always bridal. My fashion merchandising friends can attest to that for sure! I always talk about what my wedding dress (or possible dresses!) will look like when I get married. This was my favorite bridal project. Did you know that the bridal gown was not always white? It is recent that brides wear white. Before that, brides wore blue, silver, or sometimes their gowns were made from floral curtains. This was especially common post World War 2.

I was also able to explore some of the hidden meaning behind bridal gowns. In the Roman culture, brides wore a special knot around their dress that was to symbolize virginity. A bride that was allowed to wear a white gown was considered “pure” and this also symbolized virginity. Beginning in the 1990s, environmentally friendly gowns became popular. These dresses were often made from recycled materials and were rented with the intent to be returned and re-worn. This was all in an effort to help save the planet, and this is still something brides do today.



## Siblings trip to Glacier & The Importance of Family

In August of 2021, my three siblings and I went on a sibling's trip to Glacier National Park. The four of us have never been on a trip together and without our parents. We have each traveled to other places without our parents, but we have never specifically planned a trip only for us. I feel like this trip was exploring what it was like to be an adult. We were in charge of absolutely everything. When we travel with our parents they manage the navigation, the food, renting a car, but this trip was just the four of us. We had to be adults.

My siblings and I are all really close in age. My younger brother Avi is 20, my twin JJ and I are 22 (21 at the time of the trip) and my older sister Bella is 24. It's not like we were doing this trip as teenagers, but we all had to be more responsible than I think we normally would, well at least then I normally would.

What I was able to explore about myself from this trip was the importance of family. I can always lean on my siblings when I need help with anything, and they can do the same with me. Sometimes siblings are not close, but in my family my siblings and I are inseparable. The dynamics will change in the future as we move, get married, and have families, but it's important for us to always stay close and not let anything get in the way. In Glacier we were able to explore this and realize the importance of family.

Glacier National Park is located in Montana. We flew from St. Louis to Chicago, and then Chicago to Kalispel. The airport was tiny. It had two gates. We rented a car by ourselves. The car we rented ended up having a hole in the tire which we found out on the top of a

mountain. As we were driving down the mountain the tire pressure kept sinking. We were able to take the car back and rent another car, but it was a scary drive down the mountain. On the first day of the trip we hiked 15 miles, and Bella developed terrible blisters on her feet, and we had to help her. This hike is known as the Highline Trail, and it's on the side of a cliff. The elevation change is enormous. We were eventually hiking in the clouds. The air was very thin on top of the mountain, and I would honestly say that the last five miles of the hike were very scary. It was very steep, there was no one around us, we had no cell reception, but we did have bear spray in case of emergency.

This sibling's trip was so much fun, and we are hoping to do a siblings trip once a year. The four of us all live in different places. We have different lives, different friends, and we are all pursuing differing careers, however it's important for us to stay close. We do see each other often but planning a trip that was specifically just for us let me explore the importance of siblings, and what it means to be a family who loves each other.



My siblings from left to right – JJ (my twin), Avi, Bella, and Me!



# Leadership

## Jewish Life on Campus

When I think of a leader I think of my sister Bella. Bella is my older sister, although she is not older by much, about 15 months. Bella has all the qualities of a leader, especially when it comes to being a leader in a Jewish community. Bella is confident, she has a vision, she listens to others, and she is positive. My family and I are Jewish, and we observe Jewish practices. We celebrate Jewish holidays such as Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. Fontbonne University has a Catholic identity, but that was never a concern for me. Fontbonne is a warm and welcoming place to people of all backgrounds. Being one of the few Jewish students on Fontbonne's campus I knew I wanted to help lead the small but mighty Jewish group. Although we weren't "officially" a club, we still made a point to get together. This allowed me to share my background, and my faith with others, and lead a positive Jewish group.



There are a few qualities I think I have developed during my time at Fontbonne when it comes to being a leader. One of those qualities is being enthusiastic. A dull personality doesn't make a good leader. A leader needs to have a personality that is exciting. When you first meet me, I might seem a little shy, but this is not the case at all. My good friends know that I am a ball of energy, extremely witty, and definitely not boring. You just have to break the ice with me a little bit.

This quality I think is a little harder for people, or at least for me, was harder to determine. I know who I am as a person and I am happy with who I am; this makes me a strong

leader. I am shy at first, but when you get to know me, you realize I am not so timid. And that is just who I am. That is me. When I think about my sister being a leader, she is the opposite. She is outgoing from the beginning. She will talk to absolutely anyone, and everyone will talk to her. She just has that personality. But all leaders are different, and have different traits, and that is what makes our world an interesting place. One person can lead a Jewish lifestyle that is extremely extroverted, and another person (like me) can lead a Jewish lifestyle that feels more introverted.

Another leadership quality I have realized about myself at Fontbonne is grit. Defined by Angela Duckworth, “passion and perseverance for long-term goals.” (Duckworth) Grit is not a talent, or power, or luck. “Grit is about having what some researchers call an “ultimate concern”—a goal you care about so much that it organizes and gives meaning to almost everything you do. And grit is holding steadfast to that goal. Even when you fall down. Even when you screw up. Even when progress toward that goal is halting or slow.” (Duckworth) I think I was born as a person who is full of grit, however I didn’t realize that about myself until my time at Fontbonne. Fontbonne embraces all students, and helps all students succeed when the student is motivated to succeed. Fontbonne embraces students who are full of grit, students who are determined to work hard and not give up.

Being a Jewish student on campus has allowed me to blossom into a leader who is enthusiastic, embraces who I am as a person, and allows me to show my grit.

## References:

*A New York Times best seller.* Angela Duckworth. (n.d.). Retrieved February 21, 2022, from <https://angeladuckworth.com/>

## Alpha Lambda Delta (ALD) & Omicron Delta Kappa (ODK)

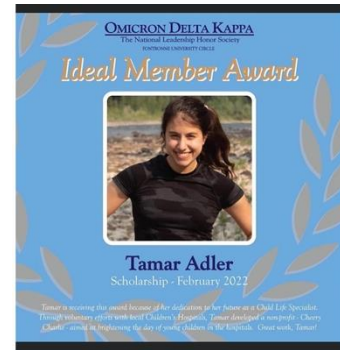
During the spring semester of my freshman year, Spring 2019, I was given the opportunity to join the national Alpha Lambda Delta society. Myself, and 19 other Fontbonne initiates were apart of “first year success” meaning that we received a GPA of 3.7 or higher



during our first year of college. Being a part of the ALD club at Fontbonne made me feel like a leader because I was being awarded for hard work, determination, and academic excellence.

For my inner self, this revealed two more leadership qualities: bravery and strength. I am extremely fearless when it comes to many things. I am not scared of heights. I climbed the Sydney Harbor Bridge in Australia a few summers ago. I am not scared of the outdoors or animals; I am pretty much up for anything adventurous. However, when it comes to school, I was always a little scared. I am not a great test taker, and school doesn't really come so easily to me. However, what I have realized is that if I just have a little

confidence in myself, I will be able to do it. And that is what I realized when I was awarded to become a member of ALD. I am brave, I have confidence in myself, and I do well. Good leaders need to have confidence in themselves even when life seems scary, and good leaders need to be strong in new situations.



During the Fall semester of my senior year, I was invited to apply to become a member of Fontbonne's ODK circle. I applied and was accepted! This society is extremely active on campus. They plan so many events, there are always activities going on. ODK recognizes leaders from all different backgrounds, doing all different things in the world. All members of ODK at Fontbonne are unique in their own way and that's what makes this honor society special.

In February 2022, I was awarded the Omicron Delta Kappa Ideal Member Award for my work I do with local children's hospitals. My award states, "Tamar is receiving this award because of her dedication to her future as a Child Life Specialist through voluntary efforts with local Children's Hospitals, Tamar developed a nonprofit – Cheery Charlie – aimed at brightening the day of young children in the hospitals." A leader is someone who gives back to others. ODK has allowed me to share the importance of charity work in the Fontbonne community. This has led me to grow Cheery Charlie.

Being a part of these organizations at Fontbonne has allowed me to find the type of leader I want to be. I want to be a leader who is brave, and not afraid to try new things. I want to be a leader who is mentally strong. And I want to be a leader who gives back to the world. I believe that every good human can be a leader, it's just about finding what type of leader you want to be and using those qualities to make yourself the best leader possible.

# *Occupation*

## Graduate School Acceptance Letter

CCLS's which stand for Certified Child Life Specialist's can obtain a degree in Child Life in a few different ways. Students can complete their degree as a bachelors or a masters. When I decided I was interested in becoming a CCLS, it was too late for me to switch out of fashion merchandising and get a bachelor's in Child Life. I decided I would continue in my fashion merchandising major, after all I did love learning about fashion, and I love my friends in the major, and my professors.

It was definitely a complicated decision for me, knowing that I will have a Bachelor of Science in Fashion Merchandising, and then a Master's in Child Life. However, as I talked to more people about this I realized that this was actually pretty common. Some people have a bachelor's degree in a field that they just find interesting, but their career is actually something totally different. After all, you never know what life is going to throw at you, and that might change your career path. It definitely did for me. My brother's bike accident was definitely a shock to our family but it led me to find an amazing future career.

It would have been possible for me to obtain a degree in child life by completing undergraduate classes, but I wouldn't finish the required courses in time to graduate with my classmates. Also, I know I will learn more if I enroll in a master's program. Instead of just doing recommended classes, a master's degree program incorporates classes, fieldwork, a practicum, and an internship all into one degree. Deciding to go to graduate school was a really scary thought. When I began Fontbonne four years ago I knew graduate school was in my future, but

just thinking about graduate school as a future endeavor, and then actually applying to graduating school are two completely different things.

I applied to the Missouri State Master's in Child Life graduate program during the fall semester of my senior year, and I found out I was accepted during my spring semester. The Child Life Master's Program at Missouri State seemed like the best fit for me. The program is online, so I don't need to move, and I liked the idea of staying in Missouri because it will help me network and build relationships all within Missouri. This program also offers three different "tracks," one of those tracks being a "standard track," which is specifically for students who do not have a background in Child Life. It felt like so many months of waiting to hear if I was accepted, and then seeing that email from Missouri State which subject line read – "congrats!" was so exciting for me!

After being an undergraduate student for four years, to becoming a graduate student will definitely be a change for me but I am so excited about my future occupation. My graduate school acceptance letter was a huge milestone in my life, and I am so excited about my future!



March 8, 2022

Dear Tamar,

Congratulations! I am pleased to inform you that you have been **accepted** into the Child Life Graduate Studies program at Missouri State University beginning in Summer or Fall 2022. I wanted to be the first to welcome you to Missouri State University, but you will be getting official notice and additional instruction from the Graduate College shortly.

## Professors that have influenced my career choices

I would say that my future occupation as a Child Life Specialist has been shaped by many things. When I started college, I really wasn't sure what I wanted to do in the long run. I originally thought the fashion industry was where I was headed, but that did not turn out to be the case. Sometimes our career paths happen accidentally, and that is what happened to me. Looking back at my four years in college I have had many fabulous professors and mentors, and there are a few that have really influenced me and my career path. The knowledge I have gained from these Fontbonne faculty members will help me go further in my career.

The first professor I would like to mention is Dr. Oliverio. Aside from the fact that I think she is an amazing teacher, what I have learned from Dr. Oliverio is that she is really supportive of all students and helping each and every one of us succeed. That is my hope as a child life specialist. I want to be there for each patient, helping them succeed in really rough moments. Dr. Oliverio is always available to answer questions, she makes class feel manageable, and in return I learn so much. Dr. Oliverio also helped me grow in my career by helping me write my personal statement essay for graduate school. Dr. Oliverio helped make my college experience feel extra special, similarly, I hope to make hospital experiences for children feel less scary.

The second person who has been a role model for me here at Fontbonne is Regina Wade Johnson. Regina is the director of the Kinkel Center, academic support and accommodations coordinator. I hope to be like Regina in my future career. Regina thinks about each student individually, and she helps each student succeed. She is very empowering. She never wants any student to fail. In Child Life, I hope to individually think about each patient and help that patient

succeed. Positivity is important in hospitals. Regina is always positive around Fontbonne, and I hope to bring some of her positivity with me.

Dr. Liljequist is the chair of the Fashion Merchandising department at Fontbonne, as well as my academic advisor. One of the things that drove me to fashion in the first place was creativity. I have a very creative brain, and Dr. Liljequist allowed my creativity to soar. I was definitely a little nervous to tell Dr. Liljequist that my career plans had changed, but I had nothing to be nervous about. Dr. Liljequist was so supportive and completely understood. The creativity that Dr. Liljequist has taught me definitely helped the design of my nonprofit, Cheery Charlie Inc., and will also help my work as a Child Life Specialist.

Lastly, I would like to mention Sadie Weiss. I met Sadie through the Kinkle Center. She would sometimes proctor my tests, or I would talk to her about the Peace Corps, study abroad, or TELOS. Sadie was so unbelievably friendly, and she was someone who would always listen. Sadly Sadie does not work at Fontbonne anymore, she is definitely really missed by me and many of my peers. What I hope to take away from Sadie into my future career are two traits. One is to always be adventurous, and secondly, to always be kind. Sadie helped students take leaps and do scary things that are out of many of our comfort zones. Sadie was always kind. One of my favorite quotes is “kindness is magic,” and this is definitely a quote I would use to describe Sadie.



## *Service & Social Justice*

### Spreading Holiday Cheer

Giving back to others has always been very important to me. This is another reason why I became so passionate about perusing a career in Child Life. Child life specialists give back to kids. They make the hospital a less scary place. They make kids feel safe when life doesn't feel so safe. Throughout high school and college, I have worked on many different projects that give back to local communities. These different projects led me to start my own nonprofit, Cheery Charlie Incorporated. Before I explain to you about my Cheery Charlie organization, I want to tell you about my other charity work.

Starting in high school, in 9<sup>th</sup> grade, I began baking for the Salvation Army. Highschool was a rough time in my life. I wouldn't say I absolutely love to bake, it's definitely not my favorite hobby however, it was an outlet for me, and it relieved some stress. What I do like about baking is the joy it brings to other people. My parents always taught us to give back to others. Giving was instilled in us from a very young age. This is something that is a part of Fontbonne's mission as well, and I love that. For example in my sewing class we sewed bibs for a local nonprofit nursery and daycare. The fashion merchandising department also recycles used denim and donates the fabrics to use as insulation.

Starting in high school, and then continuing into college I delivered desserts to the Salvation Army. I baked over 4,000 cookies, and 2,000 cupcakes. I named my project, "Bake the World A Better Place." I loved making my desserts holiday themed. I made Christmas cupcakes and cookies, as well as Hanukah desserts. And then when it came time for Easter I made bunny cupcakes, and easter egg cookies, and so much more. For Thanksgiving in fall of 2018, I baked

30 pies! 10 pumpkin, 10 pecan, and 10 chocolate pies. I absolutely love the work I did for the Salvation Army. It makes me sad that I am not baking for them anymore, and I am sure they miss it as well, however this was just a steppingstone before I created Cheery Charlie.

For many winters I helped local nursing homes decorate for Christmas. I would make Christmas crafts, and then deliver them to the nursing homes. I am a fashion merchandising major, and one of our requirements is learning how to sew. I used this skill in making Christmas blankets and pillows for the local nursing home residents. The fabrics I chose were super cute Christmas themed. I also made mini-Christmas trees out of Styrofoam cones. These were used as centerpieces in dining rooms. I made many, many ornaments for trees, and garlands out of Christmas paper. I made Christmas flowerpots to look like Santa or Rudolf. These are just a few of the hundreds of crafts I made all from home. I still hear about my Christmas crafts today, and how they are being used to bring holiday cheer.

I did this both my freshman year and sophomore year of college. During my junior year was the heat of the pandemic, so nursing homes did not want any outside products. It was that year that I decided to start Cheery Charlie.

## Cheery Charlie

I briefly talked about Cheery Charlie in my introduction to this portfolio, however I would like to explain it more in detail. I always wanted to start a nonprofit organization, I just struggled to find something that felt like the right fit. This all changed one day in June when my younger brother was in a cycling accident.



My brother Avi and I are extremely close, and he is the reason for me starting my nonprofit, Cheery Charlie. It was a Friday, around 10:30 in the morning. I was doing yoga on the floor of my room. My family was EXTREMELY (and we still are) Covid cautious. Now we are more flexible, but in 2020 we basically didn't go anywhere. Outdoor exercise was a great way to get out of the house. I was doing yoga, my new puppy Charlie was finally asleep which was a blessing because that meant he wasn't having any accidents in the house. I usually don't look at my phone for the 30 minutes I do yoga, but I got a call from my twin brother JJ saying, "Tamar, don't panic. Avi was in an accident, he was hit by a truck, we are going to the scene." Of course, I was going to panic. My sister Bella was studying in her room for the GRE. I had to interrupt her practice test, but I knew it was for a good reason.

I was crying, and I was panicked. Charlie was barking in his crate like a frantic dog. The whole scene was chaotic at our house, as well as where the accident happened. Luckily Avi was very close to home, he was on his 20<sup>th</sup> mile and almost back at our house. My twin brother JJ is going into medicine, so he was very calm. Even though my Mom is also in medicine it is a good



thing he was with her because he stayed very calm in a very scary situation.

When my mom and brother got to the scene there was a bystander with Avi who happened to have seen the accident. She was just out for a walk, and she stayed with my brother until my Mom and JJ got there. When they arrived Avi was under the truck, and the paramedics were trying to put him into a neck and

spine brace before he was rushed to St. Louis Children's Hospital. My Dad met my Mom at Children's, and JJ took home Avi's damaged bike and cracked helmet.

My sister Bella also stayed pretty calm. I was the only one who didn't. This accident changed our family, but it really changed me. I think I can more clearly see the importance of miracles, and what a blessing it was, and still is that my brother is now okay. It took a long time for me to get over what happened. Seeing my brother after the accident, when he came home is such a stark picture in my head.

After a storm comes a rainbow, and Cheery Charlie is the rainbow of this scary event. One of the people on my brother's care team at the hospital was a Child Life Specialist. Her name is Ericka, and she was with my brother the whole time. My brother was screaming pain, he had no idea what had happened to him, and he just needed someone by his side to advocate for him, distract him, and make him feel calm. This was Ericka. This is what inspired me. I wanted to volunteer with the Child Life department at Children's Hospital, however because of Covid this was not allowed. So I started making craft bags as a way to volunteer from home. This started as a very small project, but has grown to something bigger than I could have ever imagined. Cheery Charlie has donated over 3,000 craft bags to the Child Life departments at both St. Louis Children's Hospital, and Mercy Kids Children's Hospital. Cheery Charlie is also now an official 501C3 in the state of Missouri. I worked with a lawyer who helped me establish Cheery Charlie

Incorporated as a tax detectable organization in the state of Missouri. My hope is for Cheery Charlie to continue to grow and give back to as many kids in hospitals as possible.



Charlie and I donating craft bags to St. Louis Children's Hospital

Cheery Charlie was featured on KSDK Mike Bush's Making A Difference:

<https://www.ksdk.com/article/news/local/making-a-difference/st-louis-college-student-creates-special-gifts-kids-hospital/63-6d80e409-a935-471c-91b7-d2fcb9a78a08>