

Birthdays and Bravery

When Pierre Schreyer '15 was a student at Head-Royce, he was known for his sense of humor, his sense of style and his sense of all things French. He had an uncanny ability to make people feel comfortable and never missed an opportunity to make a friend, teacher or an entire assembly laugh out loud.

He was also a problem solver who, with a smile on his face, could calm nervous theater directors with his technical mastery and ease at which he tackled behind-the-scene issues, ensuring the show always went on. He was highly desired anytime there was an assembly or presentation, with organizers breathing a sigh of relief when he was in the house.

Pierre was known as the fun loving guy who always made people feel welcome and supported. He loved the camera and in a video made by his friends called "9 Things about Pierre" one thing is constant — he is dancing in almost every frame. He also noticed when there was something that could brighten someone's day or connect the community just a little bit more. As a proud

French speaker, he revitalized the Head-Royce French club and he was admired by many for the fearless way he dove into any social situation.

Pierre tapped into that fearlessness in November 2013 when he was diagnosed with stage 4, high-risk, neuroblastoma and began a two year battle with a very rare nerve and bone cancer, requiring treatments and surgeries at three different Bay Area hospitals. During his many hospital stays, Pierre noticed some simple things that could make a patient's hospital stay a little brighter. Always a problem solver, he came up with ways to raise money. With initial funding from a local foundation, Pierre began his work.

While Bingo nights were always popular at the hospital, the older kids didn't like to

participate as much because they gave out kiddy prizes, such as stuffed animals and stickers. Instead, Pierre made sure iTunes and Amazon gift cards were in the mix so all kids got in the game. He also noticed that the one rolling video game cart allowing patients to game in their rooms was always checked out. Through his fundraising, Pierre purchased three more consoles, including one reserved for immunocompromised patients, a unit that requires more time for sanitizing and cleaning before use. And since Pierre's enigmatic personality meant there were always visitors in his room, he often had trouble finding chairs for everyone to sit. He not only helped fund new chairs in his unit but Pierre selected the hippest chairs in the Team Pierre colors of orange and blue.

After spending his 17th birthday at UCSF/Oakland, he noticed many other kids were also there during their birthdays. This is where the idea for Pierre's Birthday Fund was born. His vision was to provide each child with a special personalized gift valued at \$50 to celebrate their special day. As Pierre continued to receive treatments at different hospitals, he discovered where his special fund could also fill in some gaps in services. For example, UCSF/Mission Bay



had a massage therapy program, which was very popular with young patients for pain management. With funding from Pierre's Birthday Fund, the program will continue at UCSF and the program will soon begin at UCSF/Oakland as well.

Similarly, he loved the Bead of Courage program at the Oakland hospital, a program that provides a glass bead for every procedure a patient goes through. Many patients eventually had a very long string of beads as a visible reminder of their bravery and resilience. For Pierre, his beadmaking became a way to make gifts for those he cared about, and instead of holding on to his own very long strand, he provided bracelets and gave them to those he cared about. Pierre's Birthday Fund is working to start the Beads of Courage program at UCSF/Mission Bay.

Pierre's legacy will also adorn the walls at UCSF/Mission Bay soon as his family has donated five of his art pieces for display in different areas of the hospital where Pierre stayed or received treatments. Pierre became quite the artist while participating in the hospital's art therapy program. "Pierre never had done any art before. I think it took his mind off what he was going through," said Pierre's mother, Jennifer



Schreyer. Pierre's Birthday Fund has also provided funding to secure art supplies appropriate for older patients so everyone can discover their "inner artist."

His sense of wonder and curiosity went into understanding his disease. Pierre wanted to know what was happening inside his body and he wanted others to understand it as well. He bravely decided to do his senior project on neuroblastoma — instead of turning in a paper, he produced a video documentary highlighting his journey. In the words of his mother, "Pierre was very cutting-edge about everything." The video documentary was a honest, raw glimpse into his life with his serious illness. He even worked in the research lab at UCSF for his project, testing drugs on neuroblastoma tumors, similar to his own.

Pierre passed away on October 13, 2015 and, as his family and community still feel



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the pain of his absence, his legacy is strong and growing. Pierre's Birthday Fund has been incorporated as a 501(c)3 organization and will have its first official gala on July 17, 2016, fittingly on Pierre's birthday. The fund will continue the mission started by Pierre: working to to build a support

system that makes childrens' lives more enjoyable while in the hospital.

When Pierre was very ill last Fall, a fellow student wrote to him saying "people seemed to just smile more and laugh harder in your company." On Pierre's Instagram feed, he began to post daily pictures of simple things that made him happy, such as food, friends, family — all tagged with #100happydays.

Thank you, Pierre. Because of you, there are some kids in hospitals right now who are smiling more, laughing harder and enjoying happier days.

More information about Pierre's Birthday Fund can be found at pierresbirthdayfund.org. HRS