

Tragedy to Triumph Foundation 2011 Scholarship Recipients



Melvin Brazziel is the recipient of the Alex Collazo memorial scholarship. He is an amazingly upbeat and positive person considering the terrible house fire that, as a child, burned 38% of his body while claiming the lives of his brother and sister. He has a strong faith in god and refuses to let his injuries hold him back. Melvin believes he has been saved in order to save lives himself. Thus, he is studying to become a biochemist with the hope that he can use his talents to create cures for diseases. As a football player and wrestler in high school, Melvin excelled by showing a natural leadership ability for his team and his teammates. In addition to his studies and athletics, Melvin is quick to give his time in the community by volunteering for a variety of causes.

Malia Casali has been through more than most people have throughout their lifetime. Before being taken into an orphanage at the age of 3, Malia was found by a mentally challenged and abusive woman after being abandoned alongside a river in China by his birth parents. As a baby, Malia was scalded by boiling water which caused untreated burns that prevented Malia from learning how to walk until she had two operations done at the age of four. Luckily, Malia was adopted and brought to the United States from China. Despite struggling through learning disabilities as a child, Malia is an exemplary student, appearing on the dean's list at Hinsdale South High School for all four years and will be starting her collegiate career at Southern Illinois University in the fall of 2011.



Alexandra Koscielak is a brave young woman who battled through a bout with TENS (Toxic Epidermal Necrolysis), a life threatening skin disorder that covered nearly 40% of Alexandra's body with burn-like lesions. Thankfully, Alexandra has made a near full recovery after losing her entire summer of 2010 fighting the disorder and recovering. Her fight with TENS is definitely not what defines Alexandra. She is a devoted and proud sister for her autistic brother, and also spurred along by her mom's professional work in the special education field, Alexandra has always been very involved in helping the disabled community. Alexandra has recently begun taking classes at the Illinois Institute of Art with her focus on becoming an interior designer.

William Bruce is the recipient of the Tim Miller memorial scholarship. He was seventeen in the summer of 2009 when intending to burn away some brush and leaves so the yard could be mowed the next day. Despite sustaining burns to 37% of his body, he hasn't let it hold him back from striving to reach his goals. "Jimmy" was an exemplary student at Plainfield High School where he has achieved a cumulative GPA of 4.0 and scored a 35 on the ACT test. Jimmy is an eagle scout and an active participant in his community and his church, volunteering his time to a wide variety of different causes. Since attending the University of Illinois as a freshman, Jimmy has become very involved with his fraternity, has become one of twenty head U of I lifeguards and has set forth on his career goal of becoming a surgeon.





Bridget Patton is the recipient of the Jorge Mijares memorial scholarship. She is on her way to St. Francis University's school of nursing after two years at Illinois State University. At seventeen years old, self-described as "invincible", Bridget was involved in an unfortunate car accident. She was ejected from the car, only to have the car land on top of her, leading her to suffer numerous injuries including first, second and third degree burns. Bridget has persevered throughout the experience and has become involved in the burn community, attending SOAR meetings at Loyola Hospital and burn camp fundraisers. With a positive attitude and desire to help others, Bridget has set herself on a path to become a nurse with the intention of helping burn survivors like herself.

Jimmy White is one who unfortunately learned to not play with fire the hard way. When he was ten years old, he was burned in his back yard after lighting pieces of trash on fire using gasoline. Jimmy has since learned from the experience and wouldn't change the events of that day even if he could. He has attended Camp I Am Me as a camper and later as a counselor. In addition to the burns, Jimmy has struggled through an aneurysm-like abnormality in his brain, which has set him back a year in his collegiate education. Through it all, Jimmy remains an upbeat, friendly young man determined to finish his collegiate schooling in physical education at Western Illinois University and pursue a career where he can continue to help young burn survivors.



Patrick Ryan is a recent graduate of McHenry East High School. At the age of fourteen, a gasoline can exploded in the garage when he and his friends were attempting to put a bonfire together. The explosion sent Patrick to the Loyola burn ICU where he spent seventeen days suffering from 2nd and 3rd degree burns. Patrick missed three months of freshman year of high school recovering from his injuries including re-learning how to walk due to the damage done to his left leg. Through it all, Patrick is grateful for a second chance and will begin his collegiate career at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee in the fall of 2011.

Jacqueline Carlucci is an ambitious young woman pursuing a degree in Biology at Edgewood College. As a ten year old girl, Jacqueline spilled a boiling pot of water down her leg while trying to prepare some pasta for herself. Jacqueline recalls how her classmates used to pick on her, teasing her about dropping things, but attending Camp I Am Me for young burn survivors helped shape the young woman she is today. Jacqueline is an active participant in the burn community, volunteering her time at the IFSA fire safety tent at the Illinois State fair while she will be returning to Camp I Am Me as a counselor this summer.

