



Jordan Jacobs

RSPA Scholarship Program Application Essay

About six years ago, I met a boy by the name of Jack Posnack. I immediately noticed that Jack was quite different, and that he had a terrible illness which was hard for me to understand. Over time, my family and Jack's family became close friends, and I learned a lot more about his condition

Jack has a horrible genetic disease called Familial Dysautonomia (FD), which has prevented him from living a normal life since birth. Jack has nursing care 24/7, is fed through a tube, has difficulty breathing, and has a compromised immune system. He has not grown at the typical rate for someone his age. The average life expectancy for someone with FD is 15 years.

As I came to know Jack more, I discovered Jack and I had similar interests. We talked quite a bit about a lot of things, including Jack's perspective on his own life and condition. More than anything, Jack wanted to be normal, and grow up like other kids his age. Jack's desire to be more normal created my ambition to do something for him, and in February of 2019, I co-founded a 501(c)(3) non-profit called Jack Attack LTPF ("Level the Playing Field").

The goals of this organization were to support events geared towards helping Jack feel ordinary, as well as to solicit donations to purchase gaming systems for deserving children, and raise money for the charitable Familial Dysautonomia Foundation.

One event that was organized was a weekly livestream on YouTube to stream Jack playing Fortnite. Other players from around the world would join Jack's livestream and participate in the game. The virtual gaming world provides Jack with the ability to make new friends and everyone is treated the same regardless of ethnic background, ability, gender, or economic status. During every weekly livestream, Jack's family and I invited people over to Jack's house while he played. Invited guests included my friends, my sister's friends, and members of my high school baseball team.

In 2019, I organized the Jack Attack Fantasy Football League so Jack could experience participating in fantasy football. I recruited 8 of my friends for the league and we completed our third season in January 2022. The league provided unexpected benefits during COVID because Jack could compete online without being in close proximity to other people and it helped keep him occupied. In August 2021, ESPN filmed a feature on Jack and the fantasy league which aired on SportsCenter.

Jack turned sixteen last December, outliving all expectations so far. This experience and my relationship with Jack has taught me the true meaning of inclusion, acceptance and survival, as well as the generosity of others. Creating events for Jack that involve other people has provided a supportive community for Jack and an opportunity to educate people about FD. I have learned that anybody can make a significant impact on the lives of other people as long as you are truly committed to making it happen.