

## Logan's Last Lecture-Evidence of Creative Ability

Recently, in my FIG Leader Colloquium class, a class in which we learn how to teach a class of freshmen about our experiences at Florida State, we were assigned to read the book “The Last Lecture”. We were instructed to think about what we would tell a group of students if it were our last chance. As I thought about what I would tell students in “my last lecture,” I realized a lot of the things I was describing were taught to me by one person: my high school friend Logan Kushner. One would think, “How could anyone learn the lessons of life from one person, let alone a teenager?” However, I’ve learned more from this one person than I have from any teacher, counselor or book.



Logan and I (Me on the left, Logan on the right)

Logan Kushner was a wild child in high school. As a shy, introverted and awkward teenager, most people were surprised we were friends, but that was the kind of person Logan was; he was friends with everyone. Among his best friends were jocks, geniuses, scary tattooed kids and everyone in between. He was a star football player and wrestler at his high school, and tried to compete in any sport he could participate in. He was also Prom King. Logan won people over with his confidence and big goofy smile. He greeted strangers and friends with a near tackling bear hug and always asked people how they were doing, how their families were doing, and always listened intently to their answers. He was also the most fun and confident person I have ever met. I can clearly remember him walking up to pretty girls and saying, "Hi, I'm Logan, will you marry me please?" and by the end of the night, they probably would have. Logan "never knew a stranger." He would go up to people he had never met, talk to them for a few minutes and say "want to come back to my house? My mom will make us brownies." Logan was a "Yes Man" and was always up for fun. The first time he met my brother Joe, who was in second grade, Logan picked him up, threw him over his shoulder and carried him upstairs as my brother screamed and cried. By the end of the night, he was asking my parents if Logan could babysit him. My brother is a Type One Diabetic, and when Logan learned this, he learned all about what Joe's illness was and always helped Joe with his shots and carb-counting. He even volunteered with us at Type One Diabetes fundraising events and participated in 5K races to donate money in order to help Joe find a cure. Logan loved everyone, and everyone loved him.



Logan was everyone's favorite camp counselor

In the summer, Logan and I, along with a few other friends, spent every day together. We'd meet at his house to swim, play basketball, and ride our bikes through neighborhoods we'd never been before, just laughing and having fun. If the rest of us stopped for a break, Logan would say "Come on guys, the sun's going down soon!" when you could clearly tell by the position of the sun that it was barely noon. Looking back, it seems like a movie, but he really would say that, and we never wasted a minute of sunlight. There were no obligations, and the days, as well as our skins, were golden.



Logan, Sean Irwin, and I at a Tampa Bay Rays game.

When we went away to college, we would keep in touch and Logan would always tell me to visit him, that he was having the best time and that he was making so many new friends. Meanwhile at my school, I was lonely. I was living with another friend from high school and wasn't branching out and making new friends. I didn't have Logan to push me out of my comfort zone. I came home from classes and slept, didn't participate in any clubs, and was just wasting my days away.



On January 8, 2012, Logan Kushner passed away.



I was numb. As I helped carry his casket down the aisle, I saw how many people were affected by his death. Hundreds lined the pews and stood in the back, the shock still on their faces from the moment they had heard the news. How could someone so full of life suddenly be

gone? The Rabbi made mention that it was one of the largest funerals he had ever seen, but the room was empty without Logan.

When I got back to school, I realized that I needed to change. I made a plan to honor Logan by living life the way he would have, and to make him proud as he looked down on me. I started to look for clubs and organizations that could help me meet new people, and to help me achieve my career goals. In the meantime, Logan's family was looking to honor Logan in another way; with a foundation in his name called "I'm LOGAN It!" founded encourage kids to live how Logan did through an annual flag football tournament, and other events throughout the year. Proceeds from I'm LOGAN It go to a foundation for Tourette's Syndrome, an illness Logan was afflicted with, as well as Juvenile Diabetes Research Fund and scholarships for local athletes with records of good character.

When the Kushners asked me if I could help set up the foundation and organize the tournament, I was honored. Tasked with Outreach and Team Recruiting, I contacted those who had known Logan and asked them to help take part in an amazing celebration of his life. In our first year, we raised over \$30,000 with over 20 teams competing, with many others coming out to watch and remember their friend. We just completed our second annual tournament with over 30 teams, and plan to continue to hold a tournament in Logan's name each year.



Front



Back

"Kindness Cards" that we give out to strangers with a smile

It's clear to see how many people Logan touched. It's a shame it took his death for me to realize all he had taught me. Life is 10% what happens to you, and 90% how you react to it, and Logan lived by that. If he faced a problem or conflict, he would solve it with a smile and wouldn't stress about things that were out of his control. He was never sad or bummed out. I could have brooded over his death, but what's the point in that? Instead, I celebrate his life and find joy in the fact that Logan has helped me achieve what I have. Now, I'm taking full advantage of all that Florida State University has to offer. I'm on Executive Board of Psi Chi Psychology Honor Society, am a Vice President of our chapter of Phi Eta Sigma, while also helping with "I'm LOGAN It!" I am doing psychology research with a faculty member and in the fall, I will be teaching a class. But more important than that are the friends I've made and the people I've met in the process.



The first annual I'm LOGAN It! Flag Football Tournament was huge success

Every person in the world has a story that you haven't heard. Logan tried to hear every one of them, and because of that, he was loved. He was selfless and cared about everyone he came in contact with. He complimented random people, just loving the fact that he made that one person happy. He lived to make someone's day, and he did it often. He also lived to play, be crazy and wild and fun. Every day was a new adventure. And that's how Logan lived his life. In the short 19 years he was alive, he had more fun and more people that cared about him than most people do in a lifetime. Logan's "Last Lecture" was to live every day with love and adventure. "Come on, the sun's going down soon."

