

Eulogy for Tyler Nelson

Positive Spin - October 6, 2015

Jonathan Rosenbaum

As Chair of Positive Spin, I certainly speak on behalf of the whole board of directors, its committees, members and patrons, when I say that the death of our beloved Board Director Tyler Nelson is deeply troubling and saddening to us all. Earlier this April, a man named Cory visited the shop you are now in. As often happens here, Corey explained how amazed he was by what we offer to the community, and then exclaimed, "I have lived here for 10 years, and never knew Positive Spin even existed!" Then he continued, "I work at Probation Services for Monongalia County. Would it be o.k. if I sent some individuals over here who need to perform some community service hours, ofcourse, I will carefully filter who I send over."

Who would have guessed what happened next. Three weeks later the person who was sent to us was named Tyler Nelson. At first nobody recognized the significance. But 10 years earlier, when Tyler was only 10 years old, he became the catalyst that motivated the founders to start Positive Spin after Nick Hein helped him fix his bike. Tyler asked me insisently if that made him a founder, too. I told him he was more important than just being a founder, because anyone can start an organization, but few can claim to be the real inspiration for the foundation on which an organization is built.

Like Tyler, Positive Spin would have its own problems over the next several years, but in early 2013 it was successfully reorganized, and this year on June 28th we had our first ever Annual Meeting and 10th Anniversary Celebration. Tyler attended that celebration, and he rode with us on his Positive Spin bike to Dave's snack shack and back, after which Tyler attended the Board meeting where he told us with utmost sincerity what he would like to accomplish for the organization; on that day, he became a Board Director. He had plans to take Positive Spin to the next level by helping at-risk kids like himself. But tragically, he would not live to realize that objective, which is why only three months later we are here today having another celebration.

Like Tyler, those of us here who benefit by giving and/or receiving from Positive Spin's programs and services to the community are also in a way addicts. Here you will find dealers, pushers, and junkies, just look around the building at all the junky bikes that need to be refurbished, but we are not users of the drug types that kill and breed greed, but rather we are users of drugs with amazing, healthy, enthralling, delightful Cycle-Delic affects, a family of drugs called biking that come in many enjoyable and pleasurable forms, like commuting, BMX and mountain biking, and that make our world a safer, happier, and peaceful place. Tyler recognized the power of these drugs, and this June he had truly come full circle, along with Positive Spin.

We have explored giving this warehouse a name, and I have suggested naming it after Tyler. The intent is not to put those who die from the wrong types of drugs on a pedestal, and I know it was not Tyler's intention to die on Saturday, September the 26th, but rather by naming our facility after him, his strong interest in helping at-risk kids like himself will live on not only in spirit and memory, but hopefully in our own actions at preventing other lives from being cut off in such an untimely manner from our community.

Ironically, the day before he died, there was an at-risk program being run in our facility by another organization, which recently approached us, called Chestnut Mountain Ranch, I hoped Tyler could have been there on that day to take notes and learn, but it was not to happen, because the wrong drug had already drawn him into his pending demise.

On a final note, one of the first attempts suggested for a mission statement for our organization went like this, "Positive Spin - Providing sharp tools, flaming torches and incendiary ideas to squirrely kids to build bikes and positive futures." While fortunately, this mission statement was never officially approved in this format, now we know who that kid was who was the inspiration for this statement. Our mission will continue to live on through the legacy Tyler leaves us, one that powerfully motivates us all to wake up to the inequity that exists in our world, and to create positive change, which is something we do every day at Positive Spin. Thank-you for being here today.