

## Tyler's Story

**Meet Tyler. His story inspires thousands.**

Tyler Clementi

**December 19, 1991 – September 22, 2010**

Smart, talented and creative: Tyler Clementi was deeply loved by family and friends for his kind heart and bright spirit. At the young age of 18, he became a victim of a horrible act of cyber-harassment and humiliation. His story puts a human face on the consequences of cruelty, which has been faced by millions of others suffering in silence in their schools, colleges, teams, workplaces, or faith communities. Tyler's story has inspired tens of thousands of youth and adults to be Upstanders in the face of bullying, harassment and humiliation across the globe.

### **A Passionate Young Man**

Tyler could think outside the box.

He grew up with a passion for music. Tyler began playing the violin in the third grade and became an accomplished violinist. He performed in numerous orchestras and was awarded with several accolades for his musical contributions.

Tyler was also an enthusiastic bicyclist and unicyclist.

By combining his knowledge with creativity and talent, he taught himself to play the violin while unicycling! He understood that we all must learn to embrace unique qualities in others and in ourselves.

### **Coming Out**

Another quality Tyler learned to embrace was his young, gay self.

What Does "Coming Out" Mean to You?

"Coming out" stories are all very unique, whether disclosing a sexual identity, a gender identity or other personal part of yourself. **Have you ever shared a part of yourself and been bullied?**

The summer after his high school graduation, Tyler had just begun the important journey of coming out to close family and friends. Tyler was brave and honest about who he was, but this was still a difficult, vulnerable time for him.

In August of 2010, Tyler began studying at Rutgers University where he was excited to learn, grow and have the freedom to live openly as a gay man.

He began playing violin at the institution's high level orchestra. Only a few weeks into his first semester, Tyler's musical gifts earned him a seat in an orchestra comprised primarily of

upperclassmen and graduate students. Tyler was one of only two incoming freshman who made the graduate school orchestra.

### **Targeted for humiliation**

Within weeks, Tyler became the victim of a horrible act of cyber-harassment, a type of bullying or cruelty that takes place using the internet.

At college, Tyler was immersed in his studies and violin practice. One night, Tyler asked his dorm mate, Dharun Ravi, for some privacy because he had a date. Ravi agreed but what Tyler didn't know was that Ravi was planning a horrible act of humiliation; he secretly pointed his computer's webcam at Tyler's bed, and then left.

During one spying session, Tyler's roommate captured him in an intimate act and invited others to view it online. Many other students at the university contributed to this invasion of privacy by not standing up to report or stop what was happening to Tyler.

Tyler discovered what his abuser had done. When he viewed his roommate's Twitter feed, he learned he had widely become a topic of ridicule in this new social environment. He also found out that his roommate was planning a second attempt to broadcast from the webcam.

Several days later, Tyler Clementi ended his life by jumping off the George Washington Bridge. He was eighteen years old.

### **The Tyler Clementi Foundation**

Tyler and Jane Clementi co-founders of the Tyler Clementi Foundation and parents of Tyler, started this foundation because they want to make sure that our society learns the consequences of discrimination and bullying, as they learned all too personally through the loss of their son. Natives of New Jersey they speak passionately to parents and community leaders about the need to not merely "accept" or "tolerate" children who come out as LGBT, but to embrace them as wondrous creations of God.

The loss of their son has put their lives on a course of activism for LGBT and vulnerable youth across the United States. Having come of age in an era where the capabilities of modern technology (social networking websites, webcams, cell phones, camera phones, etc.) didn't exist, they had their entire world change when they learned of the ways in which technology intensifies and exacerbates the issues around youth bullying.