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Cal Poly Student To Carry Olympic Torch A Year After Lung Transplant

Courtney Page wakeboarding

Courtney Page enjoys wakeboarding when she's not carrying torches.

SAN LUIS OBISPO -- Today, Courtney Page is a 22-year-old Cal Poly business major who rides her bike to campus, enjoys wakeboarding, and thinks she might want to transfer to the Architectural Engineering Department.

On Jan.16, she will be one of six Olympic Torch bearers carrying the Olympic flame through the Cal Poly campus. (Click [Here](#) to find out about the Olympic Torch Relay).

The honor is just one of a string of comebacks for Page, who just two years ago was fighting her way back to health after a double lung transplant at Stanford University Medical Center.

"I'm just living my life to the fullest right now - and enjoying my new life," says Page, who grew up in Cambria but now lives in San Luis Obispo in an apartment off-campus. Page was diagnosed with cystic fibrosis as a child.

The genetic disease causes the body to manufacture mucous that fills the lungs and can inhibit other internal organs to block digestion of needed nutrients. As recently as 10 years ago, most children diagnosed with the disease didn't survive past their teen years.

There's still no cure for cystic fibrosis, but new medications developed in the 1990s to treat the symptoms of the disease has allowed those diagnosed with it to live into their 20s and early 30s.

"I was actually pretty healthy all through high school; I played sports and everything," Page said. "Then in my freshman year of college, my lungs got really bad."

Page was forced to drop her classes. Her doctors put her on the waiting list for a full lung transplant, and she moved back home with her parents to wait, while her condition worsened.

In May 2000, after 19 months on the waiting list - what would have been the rest of her freshman year and her sophomore year at Cal Poly - "I got 'The Call,' " Page said. It was the official word that donor lungs were available and Page had to head to Stanford University Medical Center for a seven-hour transplant operation.

"Cambria is a small town; everybody knows everybody and everybody knows me. My brothers and my sister and my grandmother got on the phone and called about 50 people each when I heard. The whole town was praying for me," Page recalled.

Page said all the support definitely helped. During the transplant, both of her lungs were removed and replaced by donor lungs. Afterward, Page remained in the Stanford University Medical Center for a week. Then she was moved to medical center apartments across the street from the hospital to spend the next three months recovering and being monitored by doctors and nurses.

"You're supposed to stay there three months, but they let me go home after two because I was doing so well," Page said with a laugh.

She came back to Cal Poly in September 2000, ready to go. "I play basketball and tennis and I've done intramurals. I run. I'm athletic. I ride my bike to campus and all over. I go wakeboarding. I haven't gone skiing yet, but I'm going to," Page said.

It was her doctors and nurses at Stanford University Medical Center, as well as family and friends from Cambria, who nominated Page to be an Olympic Torch bearer in the relay leading up to the 2002 Winter Olympics in Salt Lake City.

Page was chosen as a torch bearer from among 210,000 nominations from across the nation for the 2002 Winter Olympics Torch Relay. She will be one of six torch bearers to carry the Olympic flame through the Cal Poly campus Jan. 16 on its way to Salt Lake City.

Torchbearers were chosen for their ability to inspire others through overcoming adversity, inspire their communities, and embody the spirit of the Olympic movement.

On Jan. 16, Page will wear an official Torchbearer uniform and carry the Olympic flame in front of an entourage of support and security runners and a caravan of official Olympic Torch Relay support vehicles.

She doesn't plan on walking. "I'm athletic," Page said with a grin. "I'll run it."

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For More Information on the 2002 Winter Olympics at Salt Lake City, visit the official Olympic Web site:
http://www.saltlake2002.com/x/f/frame.htm?u=/news/slocmain_front.asp

For More Information on Olympic Relay Torchbearers and how they are chosen:
http://www.saltlake2002.com/x/f/frame.htm?u=/news/slocmain_front.asp

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