

Tyler Decker, Working to #WipeOutALS

Written by Lois Swagerty | Photo by Taylor Mohr

Tyler Decker has a deep love of the ocean and all things surfing. Living his whole life in Carlsbad, he climbed onto a board at age 3 and never looked back. He graduated from University of Hawaii at Manoa in 2017 with a degree in Communications. But in July of 2020, at age 26, he was diagnosed with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS).

It's unusual to be stricken with this disease at such a young age. His mother Colleen says, "ALS is a rapidly progressing disease which affects the voluntary muscles. It can happen to anyone at any age, but the average age of onset is 57. Tyler is one of the youngest people in California with ALS, and possibly in the whole U.S." His first symptom was muscle weakness, and due to COVID-19, it took many months to zero in on a diagnosis. Currently, there is no cure for ALS and the average life expectancy is two to five years from diagnosis.

Tyler's sister Meghan has set up a website to garner awareness for the disease and allow people to follow his story and lend their support. Donations help fund Tyler's treatments, travel and escalating

health expenses, and Ionis Pharmaceuticals, a Carlsbad-based firm, has given Tyler the "Hope Scholarship" to Adapt Functional Movement Center in Carlsbad, where he works each week with recovery specialists.

World Surf League retired surfers Josh Kerr, Damien Hobgood, Taylor Knox and other locals are teaming up to host an upcoming wipeout challenge to bring awareness, raise funds and spotlight Tyler's campaign to #WipeOutALS. Tyler says, "While I can no longer surf, I still have

hope that I can get back on a board." Tyler wants to "be the miracle and find the cure."



The members of "Tyler's Tribe" include (from left) John Park, Tyler Decker, Todd Prestage, Damien Hobgood, Taylor Knox and Josh Kerr.

Family: Mom Colleen, dad Albert, brother Michael (age 28) and sister Meghan (24).

Occupation: When not surfing, worked at Fish 101 in Encinitas.

Favorite spot in Carlsbad: South Carlsbad State Beach campground—also favorite beach and favorite surf spot.

Favorite meal at a local restaurant: Bean, rice and cheese burrito from Lola's.

Ideal Carlsbad day: Before life took a turn, it was to wake up, go surfing, get a burrito from Lola's, surf some more and go to work in the evening.

Favorite charitable group/nonprofit: The Healey Center for ALS in Boston at Massachusetts General Hospital, specializing in research and clinical trials for ALS. Tyler's physician in Boston, Dr. Merit Cudkovic, is the leading ALS doctor in the nation. A string of extraordinary blessings and contacts allowed Tyler to get into this center.

Website and contact info: Tylerstribes.com, contact@tylerstribes.com. Donations can be made on the website through Venmo and GoFundMe.