

# **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

**T**here are many people who have played an important role in helping me reach the point I have gotten to with my health and recovery, and they deserve some special thanks. First and foremost, I want to recognize my late mom and dad. Without their love and support through the years, I never would have turned into the man I am today.

As a result of my battles with chronic heart and muscle disease, I have crossed paths with countless dedicated medical professionals. While all of my physicians have played an important role in my care and well-being, there are three I want to name specifically: Dr. Melissa Ferarro-Borgida, who was the first to dive in to my heart issue and essentially save my life; Dr. Thomas Bump, who has been the kindest and most supportive provider I could ever hope to work with; and Dr. Elizabeth McNally, who worked with me to find a safer way to pursue my goals, even when she didn't agree that I should.

I also have to thank Dr. John Day and The Stanford Neuromuscular Disorders Team for welcoming me to their myotonic dystrophy information meetings, as well as Dr. Ian Law and the Pediatric Cardiology Team out of University of Iowa Hospital for their invitation to participate in the Young Hearts with ICDs annual conference. Both physicians

and organizations provided encouragement before, during, and especially after my trip to Everest Base Camp.

I have worked with and endorsed several organizations, but there is one in my life that has shined above the rest. The Muscular Dystrophy Association (MDA) has had a tremendous impact on me, both through the connections it has provided and the assistance it has given since both my father and I were diagnosed with muscular dystrophy.

For helping me to train and prepare for the hike up to Base Camp, I must thank Dr. Mike McCahill of McCahill Chiropractic. Dr. McCahill introduced me to TRX as well as personal trainer Jennifer Strickland, who pushed me to a fitness level I no longer knew I could reach.

Putting that training into action couldn't have been done without moral support and planning to help make my dream become a reality. For that, a special thanks to my sister Chris Griffin, who, after swearing she would never do it again, attempted the trek to Everest Base Camp a second time to accompany her baby brother. Also, thanks to Jiban Ghimire of Shangri-La Nepal, who handled all the arrangements for the trek and helped me endure two disasters in the mountains of Nepal.

Though I say the trek itself has been the hardest thing I've ever done on purpose, the writing of this book is a close second; I'd like to extend a special shout-out to Janice Harper and Elise McIntosh for bearing with me and helping to make this publication a reality.

I would like to thank Glen Rodrigue, Alan Close, and Holly Morrell, who were among the first I met after being diagnosed with heart disease and remain key figures in my life today.

Finally, it's important for me to express my gratitude to Diana and Kathy, whose immeasurable love and kindness helped me overcome limitless hurdles.

There are simply too many people to thank all of them by name, but I am grateful for every single person who has played a part in my journey. I am deeply humbled by each of the people who visited me during my hospital stays, as well as those who called and reached out with messages of support when I needed them most. I am grateful to those who planted seeds of inspiration by sharing their experiences and driving me to pursue more. I'm even motivated by those people who hindered my progress, forcing me to fight even harder.

If I could physically reach out through the pages of this book and give you each a big hug, I would. From the bottom of my heart, I offer a sincere thank-you to everyone past, present, and future who has lifted me up during the difficult times, promoted me during the good times, and encouraged me to be a better person.