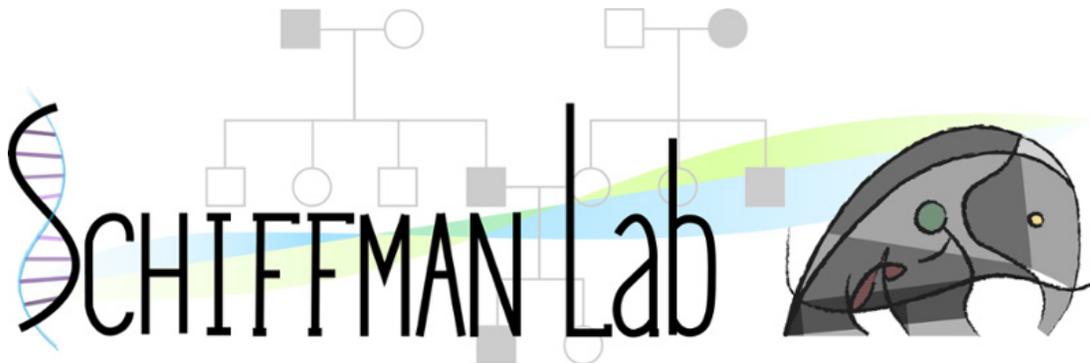


# LFSA YOUTH NEWSLETTER

WINTER 2021

## Happy 2021 from the LFSA!

For this newsletter, I had the pleasure of interviewing five members of Dr. Josh Schiffman's lab in Salt Lake City, UT, some who are working specifically with elephant TP53 research, some on other aspects of cancer research, but all with the common goal of finding better treatments that will benefit cancer patients both with Li-Fraumeni syndrome and without. It is my hope that you are inspired and hopeful after getting to know a little bit about them and the work they do! A special thank you to Dr. Lisa Abeggan, Lab Director for the Schiffman Lab, for all of her help.



For more information on the research done by the Schiffman Lab, visit: <https://bit.ly/2MmE7xg>

I would also like to introduce you to one of our LFS youth members featured in this issue, Camilla Stam. We met at the 2017 LFS Youth Workshop, and have stayed in contact ever since. She is a very positive and friendly young woman, and is a wonderful example of an LFS patient living life to the fullest!



**YUP!  
THAT'S ME AT THE  
SCHIFFMAN LAB  
IN 2017!**

I hope this newsletter inspires you to find joy in the year ahead, no matter the circumstances.

Enjoy!

Cameron Block,  
USA Youth Program Chapter Chair, LFSA

# Meet the Staff at Dr. Josh's Lab!

## JOURNEY BLY



### Tell us a little bit about yourself!

Hi! I'm Journey Bly. I grew up in Roy, Utah. At age three, I started dance and absolutely fell in love with it. I continued to dance through college as a member of the Utah Dance Team at the University of Utah. While at the U of U, I majored in Anthropology and minored in Integrative Human

Biology. I have always loved school and learning new things. In my spare time I also love to be outdoors (camping, hiking, rock climbing, etc.), traveling, reading, and spending time with my family.

### What is your role in the Schiffman Lab, and your main focus?

I am a lab technician in the Schiffman Lab. I focus on doing experiments to better understand how elephant TP53 kills cancer cells and how we can use that knowledge to make an effective cancer treatment for humans. The type of experiment I do most often in the lab involves putting elephant TP53 into cancer cells and then putting the cells into a machine that takes pictures of them so I can see if the cancer cells die once they have elephant TP53. It is very cool to see and is definitely my favorite kind of experiment to do.

**What brought you to the Schiffman Lab, and do you have any plans for what's next?** I met Dr. Schiffman while I was volunteering at the annual International Society for Evolution, Medicine, and Public Health (ISEMPH) conference in 2018. He told me all about his lab and the research they do and to contact him if I was interested in working there. So, I sent him an email and was interviewed and hired a few months later. After taking some time off from school, I am planning to go back and do a master's program in Genetic Counseling so I can help those with inherited conditions such as LFS.

### What excites you or motivates you the most about your job?

I am absolutely motivated most by cancer patients. Everything we do in our lab is for them. I want to see a time when cancer patients are able to have more effective and less invasive treatments. Being part of the research to make that a reality and seeing the progress firsthand is extremely exciting. Whenever one of my experiments in the lab goes really well or a new discovery is made, I know we're one step closer to our goal and it is such an amazing feeling!

**Is there anything that you would like to share with the LFS patients reading this newsletter?** I would like to tell you all that you are such an inspiration to me. I'm 21 years old, right around the same age as many of you. So, I know the stresses that come with being a teen or young adult and can imagine that having LFS could make things even more stressful. However, one thing I have learned from hearing the stories of many LFS patients is that you all seem to remain so positive. I hope you continue to be positive knowing that so many people, myself included, are advocating for you!

## RYAN KENNINGTON

**Tell us a little bit about yourself!** My name is Ryan, and I am 24 years old from Allentown, Pennsylvania. I graduated from the University of Delaware last year with a degree in Biology. Some of my favorite hobbies include sailing, cooking, watching soccer, and drinking coffee. In 2014, I was diagnosed with Osteosarcoma.

Today, I have luckily been cancer free for almost 5 years with little complications from the treatment/surgery.

### What is your role in the Schiffman Lab, and your main focus?

My role in the Schiffman Lab is as a lab technician. I carry out biological experiments, and record and analyze data. My main focus revolves around a better understanding of elephant TP53 and its role in cancer prevention.



**What brought you to the Schiffman Lab, and do you have any plans for what's next?** I met Dr. Schiffman at a MIB FACTOR Osteosarcoma conference and his lab's exciting, cutting edge research on elephant p53 really caught my eye. I am honored to be a part of their amazing team and hope that my work for them will one day improve clinical outcomes for Osteosarcoma patients. My future plans include applying for medical school.

### What excites you or motivates you the most about your job?

My experiences in living with Osteosarcoma and witnessing how it affects many other children and families is my main motivation behind working in the Schiffman Lab. I can only hope that through my work, I can improve the lives of future Osteosarcoma patients.

**Is there anything that you would like to share with the LFS patients reading this newsletter?** I would just like to share a quote that helped me live with Osteosarcoma during and after treatment. "Life has no smooth road for any of us. As we go down it, we need to remember that happiness is a talent we develop, not an object we seek. It's the ability to bounce back from life's inevitable setbacks. Some people are crushed by misfortune. Others grow because of it." - unknown

## AIDAN PRESTON



**Tell us a little bit about yourself!** I am originally from the Jersey Shore and earned my undergraduate degree at Providence College. I majored in Biochemistry and Psychology, while minoring in Neuroscience. I joined the Bioscience Ph.D. program at the University of Utah in 2016 and then joined the Oncological Sciences department. After trading in the beach for the mountains, my hobbies include hiking, skiing, and rock climbing.

### What is your role in the Schiffman Lab, and your main focus?

I am a graduate student researcher. My main focus is determining the function of the elephant TP53 Retrogenes and how those functions might be exploited for use in killing human cancer cells.

**What brought you to the Schiffman Lab, and do you have any plans for what's next?** During your first year of graduate school at the U, many PIs (Principal Investigators; the people who run labs) come to present their research to the students. Dr. Schiffman's first slide had a picture of an elephant on it. Elephants are my favorite animals, so I paid close attention.

# Meet the Staff at Dr. Josh's Lab! – continued

After completing my rotation in the lab (you rotate in 3-4 labs during your first year), I wanted to join because of the cool research and the culture. After graduation, I would like to work in government crafting science policy or lobbying for more funding for scientific endeavors.

## What excites you or motivates you the most about your job?

It is exciting to work on elephant p53; it's rad to try and uncover the cancer-protective mechanisms that have been crafted by millions of years of evolution. If we can better understand how elephants are protected from cancer then we can translate those findings to help humans with cancer.

**Is there anything that you would like to share with the LFS patients reading this newsletter?** Dr. Schiffman often shares the stories of many LFS patients with his lab and they always motivate us to work even harder to learn all we can about elephant p53 as fast as we can.

## AARUSHI ROHAJ

**Tell us a little bit about yourself!** My name is Aarushi Rohaj, and I am from Salt Lake City, Utah! I am studying biology, and I am a pre-med student at the University of Utah! I am a HUGE music fan: I love singing, playing the ukulele and harmonium (an Indian classical instrument), and dancing! Apart from music I love spending time with my family, skiing, reading, and watching movies.

**What is your role in the Schiffman Lab, and your main focus?** As an undergraduate lab assistant at the Schiffman Lab I have the opportunity to learn the major implications behind cancer research, broaden and deepen my knowledge regarding the oncological sciences, and help develop experiments that will add to and support the purpose of the Schiffman Lab. My project focuses on the relationship between Leiomyosarcomas and elephant TP53 (EP53) proteins as an effective treatment method for the future.

**What brought you to the Schiffman Lab, and do you have any plans for what's next?** I worked at a research lab during my time in high school, and I absolutely loved the experience! So, I wanted to continue being involved with research. After hearing that the Schiffman Lab focuses on comparative oncology (specifically studying elephant p53) in order to identify the causes behind cancer, it was pretty much the cherry on top for me! I hope to continue researching at the Schiffman Lab and building upon my project!

**What excites you or motivates you the most about your job?** Working at the Schiffman Lab is like a magical Disney Land; it's a place where ANYTHING is possible! Research is a very creative science with unconditional possibilities, and I never exactly know what will happen next just like magic! I also love the people, the positivity, and all the elephant posters at the Schiffman Lab!

**Is there anything that you would like to share with the LFS patients reading this newsletter?** I want to share my favorite funny quote about happiness! "HAPPINESS is..... when you're trying to tell something funny but can't stop laughing because you keep thinking about what you're about to say." I hope that made you smile!

## MALLORY WILMOT



## Tell us a little bit about yourself!

I grew up in Kansas City, MO and just had a strong love for science, and infatuation with the ocean. So, I decided to go to college at Northwest Missouri State University and major in Marine Biology (yes, in the middle of the country). From there I worked

in many different settings studying, coral, mussels, and different fishes, and I got to SCUBA dive a lot! I fell in love working in a lab setting in WA where we studied fish viruses and parasites. After that, my fiancé and I decided to move to Salt Lake City to be close to the mountains, we love skiing and hiking and we wanted to live somewhere new!

## What is your role in the Schiffman Lab, and your main focus?

My title in Schiffman Lab is Laboratory Specialist, and my main focus is in comparative oncology. I am looking at cell lines from many different animal species, testing those cells with chemotherapy drugs to see how they respond. We can then look at many different life traits, and cancer prevalence of that species compared to how their cells react in the lab in hopes of finding mechanisms different animals naturally have to fight cancer in the wild. Like elephants, we are interested in animals that have low cancer numbers in the wild and if we can figure out how those animals fight cancer that could be a key to a new treatment for humans to better fight cancer.

**What brought you to the Schiffman Lab, and do you have any plans for what's next?** While looking at jobs in Salt Lake City I came across the posting for Schiffman Lab. I was really drawn to the job because of the comparative aspect. I had worked with many different animals in their environment seeing how we rely on them, but I had never thought about how animals could also help humans so much. Meeting Dr. Schiffman and his team and seeing the passion in the lab for fighting for kids with cancer really lit a fire I didn't know I had. I still get to work with all kinds of animal cells (we even have dolphins and whales) and I get to help a fight that's much bigger than I. Since I am new to cancer research I am still learning many new things constantly in the lab, my future plan is to continue learning at the Schiffman Lab. Also, I want to bring my love for the ocean back to focus by finding the mechanisms of cancer resistance in marine animals and how we can look for a treatment with those mechanisms.

## What excites you or motivates you the most about your job?

The most exciting thing about my job, right now, is when we are getting new animal tissues/cells in the lab. When we get new tissues we try to generate cell lines from that some are easier than others but I am always up for the challenge. Having new animal cell lines in the lab makes me learn more about each animal and see how they will react in the lab setting. I never know what kind of data we will get out of each animal and it's exciting to think that potentially one animal can help all of our research.

**Is there anything that you would like to share with the LFS patients reading this newsletter?** I would say to any young person, find a passion in your life, sometimes this takes longer than expected but you have time to try new things! Whether you want to be a doctor, a scientist, or play video games, you never know how that might change the world, so go for it!

# Meet Camilla Stam!

## Tell us about yourself!

Hi everyone, and it's so lovely that you are reading this small story time. My name is Camilla Stam (23) from the Netherlands and I live in a small, cozy village where almost everybody knows each other. The fields are green, and the cows give us some great milk. At the moment I am studying Management. With this study I will someday hopefully manage a big company, who knows. 😊

## What are your hobbies or favorite activities when you have free time?

I love taking small trips to other places in Europe, but also here in the Netherlands. The world makes me curious and gives me energy whenever I am exploring. Besides that, I like being with my friends, family and my boyfriend, who has still been keeping up with me for the last 3 years.

## Did you make any New Year's resolutions?

To gain weight haha! No seriously, I think it will not be bad for me to gain some kilograms.

## What is one way your LFS diagnosis has impacted you in a good way?

Together with my sister, we went to Utah and met so many beautiful, strong LFS survivors. It also gave me a beautiful contact with one of the teens from the LFS youth program, called Cameron. We don't speak all the time, but when we do it is always so warm and so nice. Besides that I have learned that life can be a climb, but the view from heaven will always be the greatest.

In loving memory of the LFS teens that left us too soon. ❤️

## What is one piece of advice you would give to another young adult with LFS?

The expectations these days can be so high and sometimes so rough. And then also those stupid cancer cells that can't leave you alone... You're a young adult now, show everyone how much bravery you have!



That beautiful LFS youth teen on the left ... that's my wonderful sister. The one with the dark hair, that is me.



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