

Chloe's heart thumped a million miles a minute. Her stomach jumbled, twisting every which way; butterflies threatened to carry it right out of her body. She glanced to her side to see the proud tears in her mother's eyes as the announcement bellowed through the stadium. She'd done it. In light of all that had happened in the past year, she won. Chloe Stevens was awarded the title of Allen's 2015-2016 homecoming queen. From coming to terms with her father's passing when she was 10 years old to her twin brother Clark's suicide in 2014, senior Chloe Stevens is no stranger to tragedy.

The Stevens twins were always exceptionally close. Clark was a source of strength to Chloe: her "other half."

"Clark was very funny," Chloe said. "He always carried himself in a manner that was gentle, yet bold. He knew how to handle himself. I admire him so much."

Clark's suicide resulted in the loss of not only Chloe's brother, but her best friend.

The hardest part the past year has been coming home and not being able to laugh with him after a long day," Chloe said. "He can't help me with homework anymore. I was left on my own."

Oct. 5 marked the anniversary of Clark's death. A memorial in his honor was held at the Yellow House Salon and Boutique. Friends and family gathered to release sapphire balloons and reflect on his life.

"If I could go back in time, I would tell Clark that I love him," Chloe said. "And that I never stopped loving him. No matter what, I would always be there for him, you know? I miss him."

In response to the tragedy Chloe faced, peers, friends and teachers came together to help her find comfort.

“The most amazing outcome of this year has been all the compassion and love I have been shown by complete strangers,” Chloe said. “And all the friendships that have come out of the woodworks. There’s so many people that have been here for me.”

After enduring a devastating loss, Chloe picked herself up again in order to help others. To aid in healing, Chloe has begun devoting her time raising awareness for suicide prevention and mental illness.

“[Raising awareness] helped me understand that suicide doesn’t just happen,” Chloe said. “It’s a process of mental functions. It’s also made me realize that there is help. There is always a way to be better and heal yourself.”

In April, Chloe participated in a walk for suicide awareness with the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention. Participants walked all night in order to raise money for funding research, education and advocacy to battle the rising suicide statistics.

“While doing that walk I really started seeing that so many people struggle with mental illness, and nobody ever talks about it,” Chloe says. “I want kids to know that it’s OK. It’s normal. Help is available.”

Her dedication to the cause of suicide awareness and prevention in the face of tragedy has earned Chloe the admiration of her peers.

“[Chloe] is the strongest person that I know,” senior Sarah Hirsch said. “Even with everything going on in her life, she still manages to care about other people.”

Almost exactly a year after Clark's death, Chloe was awarded the title of Allen's 2015-2016 homecoming queen after a long campaign process.

"I never would've thought I would run for homecoming queen," Chloe said. "I never would've thought I would do something so bold."

Chloe's newfound boldness is her silver lining. Throughout the past year, she has gained strength in herself and her Christian faith. She took devastating heartbreak and transformed it into motivation for recovery for those who are fighting suicidal thoughts or mental illness; into a lesson of humility, grace and compassion for those of us who are mourning loved ones.

"If you are struggling with suicidal thoughts or mental illness, it's important to tell someone," Chloe says. "Tell me, tell another friend. There will always be someone that is here for you. It's important to get professional help. Suicide doesn't have to be the answer."

If you or someone you know is struggling, please seek help. The number for the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline is 1-800-273-8255.