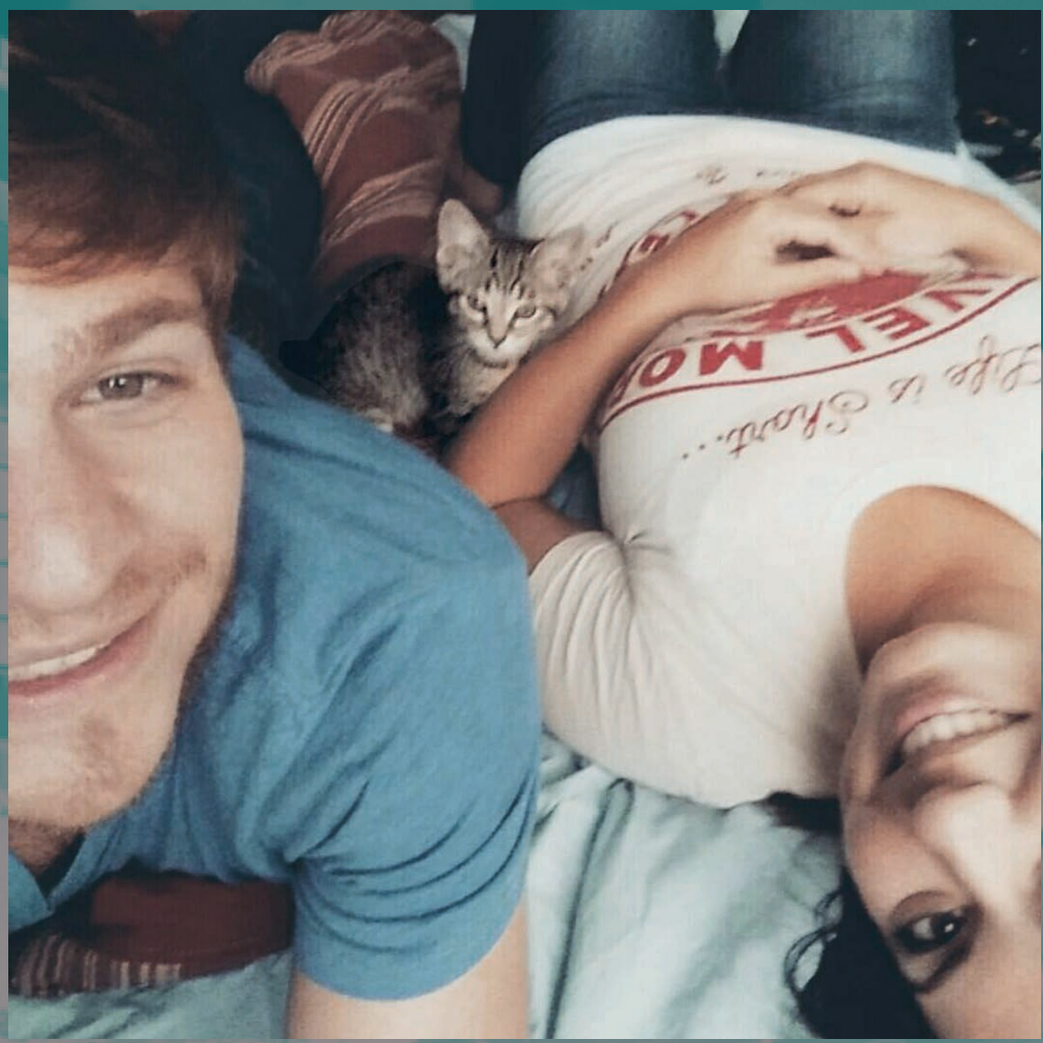


LIFE-ALTERING

As Jenny Perez (Class of '21) watched a team of doctors treat her husband, 25-year-old Greg Morgan, for a rare form of cancer, she decided to finally take the MCAT and apply to medical school. For years, med school was just a hope, something she talked about. But seeing the way doctors tailored their treatment for Morgan to align with his specific end-of-life needs motivated her. It also changed her view on patient care; she realized how critical quality of life is for patients.

"I feel like I can give back in that way," says Perez, who is class president. She hopes to become a neurosurgeon:

"When someone needs surgery for a brain tumor, you may not always be able to save their life, but you have the opportunity to make the rest of their life as good as it can be."

The couple lived in Seattle. He was a research assistant at the University of Washington. Perez had just completed her PhD in anatomy and cell biology at Wayne State University School of Medicine in Detroit and was working as a senior fellow at the University of Washington School of Medicine.

But then Morgan suffered a string of seemingly innocent symptoms—he experienced a swollen neck and headaches and lost his sense of smell. Morgan was diagnosed with sinonasal undifferentiated carcinoma, which accounts for only 3 percent of all head and neck malignancies. An aggressive round of chemotherapy and proton radiation therapy shrunk the original tumors, but the cancer had spread to his brain fluid. Through it all, Morgan's positive attitude never waned.

Perez says watching her husband die was a horrible, traumatic experience—the worst thing that ever happened to her. But, it also made her stronger and more patient.

"People get so worked up about things, and I'm just like, 'It's fine.' I'm able to remain calm so well now." —*Kate Benz*