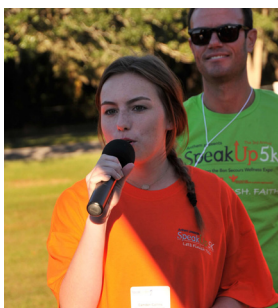


SPEAKUP STORIES

THE COMMUNITY SPEAKS UP

CAMDEN COLLINS SPEAKS UP



Camden Collins

When the sun rose on the morning of October 22, you could feel the excitement in the air. My name is Camden Collins and I sang the national anthem at the first ever SpeakUp5k Tampa. I have been friends with Madeleine Gallagher, Cameron's cousin, since our 6th grade year, the year Cameron passed away. While I never met Cameron personally, I was familiar with her quotes that hung on Madeleine's walls and I had listened to stories about her. Attending the SpeakUp5k made me realize that I see Cameron every day, through the Gallagher family.

I've always had a passion for singing, whether it meant singing at chapel during school, talent shows, or even school productions. I had only sung the national anthem at my middle school's 5k fundraiser, but despite my lack of experience, I was beyond honored when Mr. Gallagher asked me if I would sing our nation's song at the SpeakUp5k Tampa.

When I arrived that morning at Al Lopez Park, it was 7:00 am and while the sun wasn't shining yet, spirits were glowing. I remember that I hadn't planned on running, but with the encouragement of my friends and inspiration from Cameron, I couldn't resist. After I sang the national anthem, the race was on. Before that morning, I knew briefly about Cameron's story, but afterwards, I was an expert. I saw all of the plans Cameron had drafted in action. Things like cheer zones and quote alley uplifted me while I ran, or walked, my heart out. I think the most important thing I took away from that experience was that, while Cameron was only given a short time in this world by the Lord, she did so much that will last lifetimes longer than her own.



[Cameron K. Gallagher Foundation](http://CameronK.GallagherFoundation)