Lying on the cold snow, peering through my teary eyed vision, I had no idea what just hit me. Looking at me, one might have thought that the layers upon layers of ski jackets and pants my mom bundled me up in might have served as protection, but no; the reckless teenager that knocked me down ended up breaking my arm. As I slowly skied down the mountain with my eyes frozen shut by my tears, I swore that this would be both my first and last time skiing.

Seven years went by and I had proudly managed to keep my distance from Mt. Hood, the local mountain near my home; that is, until the Fall of my junior year. Whether it was the constant persistence of my friends, the need to prove to myself that I can do anything, or the allure of a no-cut sport, I joined my high school's alpine ski race team. Looking back on it, if I had known alpine secretly meant plummeting downhill, emphasis on plummeting, I might have reconsidered. However, my determination to get back on the mountain ended up not only being one of the most challenging, but rewarding experiences of my high school career.

After the first practice I realized, to my utter dismay, that I was not as good at skiing as I had hoped (generously stated). Seeing that there was no hope in me becoming the next Olympic skier, I decided to set little goals for myself instead. Standing at the top of my first course, heart beating, snow limiting my goggle vision of endless alternating blue and red gates, I had a single goal: if I fell over I would get up and still finish the race. Over time, my goals started to increase in difficulty: from not falling, to beating at least one other skier. As my skill on
the slopes failed to increase, rather than becoming discouraged, I found joy in cheering on my teammates.

However embarrassing it was for me to have handfuls of experienced skiers watch as I painfully skied/tumbled down course after course, I started getting recognized by fellow skiers from other schools and the volunteers who kept time at our races (maybe they were surprised that I kept showing up to races?). I became known as the girl who cheered the loudest and got everyone pumped up... and as the girl who did not know how to ski. I did not let the latter affect me though. I pumped up every teammate, cheering, singing songs, and even dancing, to get our minds off of the brutal winter weather and terrifyingly steep race course ahead. I learned to find joy in the little successes. My foolproof plan of striving for mini goals and keeping the team enthused ended each race day with a feeling of accomplishment.

As much as I had hoped, this is not a story about a girl who finds her passion late in life and becomes an amazing Olympic ski racer, inspiring young children across the nation. I never did become the best skier on the team, or even close to the best for that matter, but I can still inspire others to try new things. In fact, don't just try, re-try things especially if it goes terribly wrong the first time. The next time a reckless teenager knocks you down, get right back up and try, try again. (572)