

Downstate and determined: Meet Kayla Previti

March 2, 2015

Hurricane Sandy spared no mercy for Staten Island.

More than 10 feet of water inundated Kayla Previti's house, two blocks from the beach. She, her parents and her grandparents lost everything they owned and were left homeless for nine months. But when it came to their neighborhood of single-story bungalow homes, they were the lucky ones.

"My neighborhood – Midland Beach – and Fox Beach had the worst number of people who died," remembered Previti, now a first-year health sciences major at SUNY Broome.

A student of CSI High School when the storm struck, Previti and her family spent nine months without a home. She had a somewhat nomadic existence, staying with her cousins and friends during the week so she could attend class, and with her grandmother in New Jersey on the weekends. A post-Sandy housing shortage thwarted plans to move away from the water, and the family ended up moving back only two blocks away from their previous home.

The ordeal gave Previti a new appreciation of her family life, but also spurred her decision to go away to school. Home just wasn't home anymore after the storm.

She originally opted for a private institution – York College of Pennsylvania – to study nursing. The catch: she had to pay for it. Her enthusiasm for the school drained away once she saw the cost, and realized the burden of debt she would face.

"It was fine for me – until the numbers were in front of my face," she said.

Belatedly, she applied to colleges in the CUNY system but didn't hear back quickly. She then opted for SUNY Broome, visiting campus for the first time when she took her placement test. It turned out to be a good fit.

A resident of the campus' brand new Student Village, Previti became a Resident Assistant in the spring. It's a busy job, as she answers her fellow students' questions and helps them with a variety of issues – getting locked out of their rooms, for one – at odd hours.

"I love meeting new people and I get along with everybody," she said. "I wanted to be an RA since the beginning of the year."

Previti also lends a hand with the Broome Community College Foundation's Phonathon. She was one of the top three callers in Fall 2014, raising almost \$4,000 individually for student scholarships.

Once she completes her degree at SUNY Broome, Previti hopes to continue her education, ultimately becoming an occupational therapist. It's a profession she was exposed to early by way of her younger brother, who has high-functioning autism. When occupational therapists came to their house to work with him, Previti participated, too.

"To me, it was a game," she said.

At the age of five, she joined her brother at a specialized preschool that allowed them to stay together. It was an experience that continues to shape her future.

"I was like the little OT helper for my brother," she remembered with a smile. "It made me feel important."

Filed Under: [Uncategorized](#)