



NEWS RELEASE

DSG TEAMMATE JENNIFER AYERS CONTINUES HITTING THE RIGHT NOTES FOR MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS

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Jennifer's brother, Nathaniel, was the basis for "The Soloist" and she continues to advocate for mental health resources.

Jennifer Ayers has quite a story to tell.

Before getting into it, she wants everyone to know something: All of our mental health stories, whether they play out on the big screen courtesy of a Hollywood film or are discussed within a small circle of our loved ones, are equally important and deserve to be told.

Hers is simply one of many stories that can bring us together.

Jennifer, who is the golf lead at the DICK'S store in Newnan, Georgia, has witnessed the power of telling your story. She is the sister of Nathaniel Ayers, whose personal tale shot to fame first in the pages of the Los Angeles Times before being turned into the major motion picture "[The Soloist](#)" starring Oscar-winner Jamie Foxx as Nathaniel. A virtuoso musician who trained at the renowned Julliard School, Nathaniel has been impacted by schizophrenia for

much of his life. He was homeless, living in an area known as "skid row" in Los Angeles, when a reporter happened upon Nathaniel and forever changed both of their lives, as well as Jennifer's. The encounter led to a book and the film "The Soloist" was released in 2009.

"Thankfully, my brother is still alive -- and he still has a mental health condition," said Jennifer. "So, I continue to have discussions with the hope of resulting in a better understanding from our society."

Jennifer has been tireless in her efforts to ensure the buzz surrounding "The Soloist" wasn't the crescendo of her mental health advocacy. Since the film premiered, she created the nonprofit [Friends of Ayers Foundation](#) to support her work and also wrote the book, "[Hear The Music: Memoirs From the Sister of the Soloist](#)". Jennifer has been featured as a guest speaker at numerous engagements, including events for her DICK'S teammates. On September 17, she will bring together her passions for golf and mental health awareness by hosting the inaugural [Hear the Music golf tournament](#) in Hampton Georgia, which DICK'S is a proud sponsor of.

Her efforts have not gone unnoticed.

"Every time I have gone out to do a presentation, I have always had someone come up to me to say 'thank you' and then share their own story," said Jennifer. "It is so powerful to see the relief in the face of someone sharing, maybe for the first time, what they have gone through."

The experience of shooting to fame while such a personal family story was playing out in movie theaters was a whirlwind for the Ayers family. They also saw it as an opportunity to put a spotlight on the subject of mental health awareness and the importance of encouraging an open and honest society that empathizes with the role mental health plays in numerous lives.

She notes that her family was truly lucky that a one-in-a-million chance led to Hollywood -- and that their circumstance is far from the norm. That's why she's dedicated to seeking help for those who need it, which is also a core value of our company. DICK'S is proud to offer our teammates additional resources that go above and beyond to help address mental health needs. Unique offerings like our Employee Assistance Program provide mental health services to all teammates, regardless of status. Jennifer noted those kinds of programs are vital and can make a big impact.

As for Jennifer and Nathaniel, they still communicate regularly by phone calls and, more recently video call, which is a big step for Nathaniel. Jennifer is looking forward to visiting her brother in California soon. Like so many others with a loved one with a mental health condition, she'll always care for her brother. That has its challenges. When Nathaniel initially moved to California, Jennifer and family didn't know and didn't find out where he was for years. When she visits, there are times she'll wait days for him to be ready to see her. It took some time, but she has grown to understand and says, "It's just part of the process." It can

be difficult, but their bond is unbreakable and they have shared countless wonderful moments as well.

Jennifer and her family will always be linked to the story that played out in "The Soloist" but her continued work lets people know that they are not alone in their own journeys.