



Ciara Allen, Issa Moody,  
Miles Rogers, and Meagan  
McLeod of Illumina.  
Video still by Illumina

## Video: Illumina staff share who inspired them to work in genomics

*To these four employees from across the organization, Illumina's mission is personal*

AS TIME GOES ON, it becomes near certain that a major health issue will arise for every one of us—or someone we care deeply about. The challenges that come with them can play a formative role in our lives, and influence the career paths we take.

At Illumina, most of our products are intended for research use (a few are approved for clinical diagnostics)—but research often leads to discoveries that will help patients down the line. In our Share Your Why video series, our colleagues get candid about what, or who, inspires them to dedicate their days to shaping the future of genomics. Watch the video below to hear what they had to say, and read on to learn more.

Watch the video at [youtube.com/watch?v=3D1YkzVlc\\_Y](https://youtube.com/watch?v=3D1YkzVlc_Y)

### **Ciara Allen, Associate Technical Project Manager**

On Christmas Eve of Ciara Allen's high school sophomore year, her father had a heart attack at work and was airlifted from Maui to O'ahu for emergency triple bypass surgery. Then, in her senior year, her mother underwent chemotherapy and radiation treatment for lung cancer.

Ultimately, her mother's entire left lung had to be removed.

Allen spent many sleepless nights wondering where to go to college. She'd planned for the University of San Diego—but could she afford to be that far away from her parents in Hawai'i? "Despite the time difference," she says, "despite the many miles between us, it was really important for my parents that I go." She studied business economics, and became the first person in her family to earn a bachelor's degree.

They eventually learned that her father lacks the gene that breaks down LDL cholesterol, which means that Allen is also predisposed to the same condition. She has regularly checked her cholesterol ever since, and she's become a vocal proponent of genetic testing, which can help other families learn what risk factors to watch out for.

Then, when she saw a job posting at Illumina, she remembered how difficult her mother's cancer treatments were and asked herself, "Is there something better we can do? Something less invasive, more targeted, that makes treatment easier on the patient, on the families? And that goes hand in hand with Illumina's mission."

Allen is now a part of Illumina Laboratory Services, but

she spoke about the role she held on the Site Services team, where she oversaw all the employee amenities at Illumina's San Diego headquarters. "I feel so happy to be where I am today," she says. "I'm not the person in the lab doing the experiments, but I am the person supporting that person—who's then supporting patients and their families. We're making a difference in the world for today, for tomorrow, for the next generation of children."

### **Issa Moody, Manager of Product Marketing**

Issa Moody has enjoyed learning about science ever since elementary school, but one factor he singles out that pushed him toward biomedical research is his late brother, who had bipolar disorder. He saw firsthand the heavy impact that disease can have on a person's family and their quality of life.

Moody earned a master's in business administration from the University of California (UC) San Diego, as well as a PhD in molecular biology and biochemistry from UC Irvine. He kept his brother's memory close to his heart, and when the opportunity arose to join Illumina, he knew it could be a way for him to help patients like him, even indirectly. Equipped with pharmacogenomic data, Moody says, clinicians can make better predictions about which drugs would help a particular patient: "I feel like there's always the 'What if?' What if he was prescribed the right medication? Maybe he'd still be with us. Knowing that we're working to make that a reality for everybody is certainly rewarding."

He sees his current position in marketing as simply a different way of making a difference: The activities and collateral he's involved in can reach as many lives as lab work can, by promoting awareness and helping educate researchers about cutting-edge genomic technology that could help power new discoveries. He explains that the most inspiring part of his job is every time he gets to work on something that shows how Illumina's technology actually benefits a patient—through pharmacogenomics or carrier screening, for instance. "Ideally, we all want a job where you feel like you're making a difference, and at Illumina, all our technology is designed to improve human health in some way."

### **Miles Rogers, Manufacturing Equipment Engineer**

As a child, Miles Rogers lost his grandfather to Alzheimer disease—and his aunt, just a few years later. "I had to see her forget who I was," he says. "It really digs a hole in you. I don't think anybody deserves to feel that kind of pain, ever."

He studied neuroscience at the University of San Diego, and when he graduated, he applied for a job at Illumina... and didn't get it. But his parents didn't raise a quitter. They pushed him to be the best he can be, and he thanks them every day for it: "You can get the straight As, but if you're passionate, if you have perseverance, you will get much farther in life. And so far, those character traits my parents taught me have gotten me here."

So, he kept at it. It took several tries, but he finally landed a job. Why focus on Illumina? He says it wasn't just the employee basketball, volleyball, and tennis courts—though he adds that those are great perks, considering that he played collegiate sports, just like his grandfather—it was the knowledge that Illumina scientists are working on things that have never been seen before, unparalleled and on the cutting edge. "There's always joy in the discovery, and in the endless possibilities. I wanted to work here, specifically. I believed in the mission statement."

Rogers recently moved from quality control to join the R&D organization as an assay development scientist, which he says he's "absolutely elated" about. Now he works with researchers to develop workflows for Illumina customers. And while it may not directly support Alzheimer research, "the idea that I'm impacting human health through any means is what drives my passion. I know what loss feels like. You feel helpless; there's nothing you can do but feel that loss. And I don't want to feel helpless anymore." ♦

*Follow this link to read about Meagan McLeod's career, and her pivotal role in the global launch of our newest sequencer:*

*[illumina.com/company/news-center/feature-articles/illumina-careers--expanding-access-to-ngs-in-emerging-markets.html](https://illumina.com/company/news-center/feature-articles/illumina-careers--expanding-access-to-ngs-in-emerging-markets.html)*