

Dear Dumb Cancer and the Silver Lining.



2017 CSCGP Middle School Teen Essay Contest

2nd Place Winner

Dear Dumb Cancer and the Silver Lining

By Hannah White

When I was six years old, my family and I went on a vacation to Florida. As I remember it on the third day, my mom told me and my sister that she had cancer. My sister was crying a lot but I had no reaction. See, I had no reaction to what she said because I was six years old, only a first grader, and didn't know what cancer was. When she explained what cancer was and I still had no reaction. Again, I was six years old and happy before she told me she had cancer. At that moment, I was thinking, "okay she just popped something up randomly, what do I think?" I didn't know what to think. What I'm thinking now is, "What would I have done if I knew what cancer was and would it have affected me more emotionally than it actually did? It probably would have affected my emotions more." Maybe I was scared and that made me feel numb. I had already had gone through so much change with my parents' divorce and my brother's behavioral issues. My mom was still working full-time for a few years after she was diagnosed with breast cancer. Then, I didn't understand the stages of cancer. Now I do. I understand that my mom at stage IV will never be cured and that chemotherapies do stop working or don't work at all on my mom's tumors. Dumb cancer!! Everything could completely change within months or weeks. I hate uncertainty. When she was first diagnosed, she went through chemotherapy and many surgeries. She remembers me being scared but not wanting to talk about it. Now, she'll be on some type of chemotherapy for the rest of her life.



Dear Dumb Cancer and the Silver lining.

The silver lining. My mom always tries to get us to look at the opportunities cancer has brought us. Some opportunities arose for us such as Kids Support and Camp Kesem which I've been going to since the UPenn chapter started. I made lots of new friends. Kids Support and Camp Kesem let me spend time with kids in my same position. At Kids Support, I go to once every other week and talk about my feelings towards cancer and also have fun. Kids Support helps me talk about the worries and frustration I have with cancer. Camp Kesem is once a summer and we don't focus on cancer. We focus on having fun! Then at the end of the week, the cabins members form circles and share their experiences with cancer. And their stories. Some of the stories are really sad and make me very emotional.

When I was in 5th grade, I went to Lake Tahoe for a cancer retreat with other families and we stayed in a mansion. I had a really good time there. Then that summer before 6th grade, my family drove across the country on a "Big Adventure" and went tent camping for five weeks. We stayed in many National Parks and saw a lot! At Glacier National Park, we got to touch snow in July. Then during 6th grade, we were able to go on another cancer retreat in Florida as a family. This retreat was really fun because we went to Disney, Universal, and Sea World. My favorite place was Universal Studios because the rides were awesome! I stayed up late and swam in the hotel pool every night which was awesome! When we returned home from the retreat, I was sad because all the amusement parks were so cool. But I was also happy because I saw my dogs again. As I'm writing this essay, my family is eagerly awaiting another retreat in Vermont in a few weeks. My mom has done on a bunch of adventures like surfing in Hawaii, rock climbing in the Rockies, snowboarding in Oregon, and skydiving with a cancer friend. Although my mom has cancer and continues to go through chemotherapy, cancer has given us lots of cool opportunities and all of it has changed my life quite a lot....for better or worse. Cancer is sad, frustrating, and creates big giant worries, but if I look really hard it does have a silver lining. Cancer's not going away but that doesn't stop my family and especially my mom from living life!

