



2019 Ben Strauss Youth Program
Middle School
Teen Essay Contest

Anne Pallozzi

Live Life to the Fullest

To most people, cancer is just a nightmare, and will never be more than that. Sadly, this is not the case for my family. Cancer first struck my family in 2010, when my brother was just nine months old. He was going in for a routine check-up with his doctor when they noticed that something was just not right. What my mom had thought was just a baby potbelly was actually a tumor. My brother was diagnosed with hepatoblastoma, a type of liver cancer. He had to undergo many cycles of chemotherapy. This was very hard on our family since it was the first time someone had cancer and, back then, my parents were both working. When it was all done we thought it would be the last time someone in our family would have cancer. We were wrong. In 2016, my brother was diagnosed with a brain cancer called Medulloblastoma. We got lucky and, they were able to remove all of the tumor. After he got out of the hospital, he had to do six rounds of radiation and nine rounds of chemotherapy. This diagnosis was way harder on me than it was the first one. Many mornings when I woke up my mom and brother had already left for radiation or chemo. My family was positive that we were done with cancer after that. Once again, we were wrong. About one year after my brother finished treatment, my mom was diagnosed with metastatic bowel cancer. This diagnosis was the hardest on my family. It is very hard for my family when my mom gets chemo. Her chemo makes her tired most of the time and very, very sensitive to cold. When she is on chemo we constantly have to heat her drinks up because my house is so cold. Cancer has prevented us from doing fun things together because we are constantly looking after my mom. It affected my dad the hardest though because now he has to work, clean the house, and look after me and my brother. However, even though cancer has caused many horrible things for my family, it has caused even more good things. For instance, I have met many wonderful people through cancer support groups and I have made friends in many different states. When

I was at Camp Sunshine, I made friends from Rhode Island, New Jersey, and many other places. I have had many wonderful experiences from cancer support communities here too. My brother's Make-A-Wish trip is something I will remember forever. The people there made my stay fantastic and someday I hope I can go back there to volunteer and do the same for some other family. All the people that volunteer at Gilda's Club have made my time spent there wonderful. Gilda's Club has also given me many opportunities that I would never have had originally. I was able to face paint at the dog walk in 2018 and do many more things. Cancer has taught me to see the world differently. Now I don't look at what I don't have, I look at all the wonderful things that I do have in my life!