



2020 Ben Strauss Youth Program
Middle School
Teen Essay Contest

Kayla Holmes

Living and Overcoming Cancer

“If it's your time, it's your time”, a quote that my grandma, Mary C Lemon, lives by ever since a diagnostic test came back positive and changed her life forever. On March 8th, 2007, my grandma was diagnosed with Multiple Myeloma. Multiple Myeloma is a type of cancer that forms in white blood cells called plasma cells. The group of plasma cells becomes cancerous and multiplies while the disease can potentially damage your bones, immune system, kidneys, and decrease red blood cell count. She is the first person in the family to have a life-threatening disease; it changed the whole family's outlook on life completely. She had to have many blood transfusions, go through chemotherapy, and suffered from drastic weight loss.

I found out in elementary school that my grandma had this disease. I didn't know how to feel at that point in my life. All these thoughts were going through my head. Part of me felt shocked and confused. The other part felt sad and awakened because I didn't know if I was going to lose my grandma. My grandma means so much to me.

My mom, aunt, sisters and I received a call 6 years ago that my grandma might not make it. We drove to VA the very next day to visit the rehab center that my grandma was staying at. When I walked into the room my sisters and I ran over to my grandma's bed to hug her. Before we knew it we were all in her bed comfortable. I asked my grandma when is she going home and she said: “I don't know, but it will be soon”. I didn't want to keep asking her about her health so I changed the subject. My little sister asked grandma for some milk and that's when my mom said grandma doesn't have milk here. Normally when visiting my grandma she has three boxes of milk with colorful straws waiting for us and this time it wasn't. My grandma got real defensive towards my mom because she didn't want her grandkids to see her like this. She

insisted on giving my mom her debit card so her grandkids could get whatever they wanted from the store across the street.

My grandma will be 80 years old this year. No one thought she would have made it this long; not even her. She is the glue that holds the family together. I don't even want to think about how life or this family would be without her. This experience has taught me to value your loved ones and not to take anything for granted. I count my blessings every day knowing I have one more day with her. This experience is not a good thing or bad thing but I'm glad this happened because it has brought our family closer than it would have ever been in my perspective. She is one of the strongest women I know. I feel like there's nothing she can't overcome.