



2020 Ben Strauss Youth Program  
High School  
Teen Essay Contest

# Samantha Schneider

## The Terrors of Cancer

As I was looking through the endless pictures in the totes that lie in the basement and watching live footage of my childhood taped on the old video recorder, I was reminded of the endless happy memories with my family. The footage of my aunt wishing me a happy birthday while i was giggling on the swing set and pictures of us always together. The memories of endless visits to my grandmother's house, a major part of my childhood. That was all until a terrible illness overcame these two resilient role models in my life. Malignant cells course through the human body, slowly overtaking each of the healthy cells until you become ill. You soon find yourself at a constant war with these harmful cells, fighting with all your might to stay healthy. These cells can change your physical appearance, limit your capabilities, and take away your life. It takes an infinite amount of strength to fight these monstrous cells, but in some cases,

you're unable to win the battle. This is known as cancer and for me it took away my aunt and is currently eating away at my grandmother.

In the year of 2016, my aunt Cindy was diagnosed with stage four Uterine Sarcoma. Once she was taken to the hospital, she never returned home and died within a matter of a few months. Cancer rapidly devoured her, taking away her strength making her weak, made her boney, and left her with a raspy quiet-like voice. The one thing cancer failed to take from her was hope. She held onto hope that she would recover and get better even with everyone around her telling her she was dying. She showed me what it looked like to be at a constant battle with yourself, yet still remain positive and hopeful. May 29<sup>th</sup> of 2016 is the day the malignant cancer cells had won the fight and took my aunt's life. Finding this news out had felt like everything inside me had collapsed like a boulder had just swung into a building and it all came crumbling down into a million pieces. I had never felt so incomplete as my heart was shattered. I longed to see her, to hear her voice, to just be in the same room with her once more. Everyday since her death has been a struggle, a constant hardship of not having my best friend here with me. She always supported me in everything I did and was so proud of my high grades as she would always take me out shopping after school for an award. If only she could see me now, a freshman in high school, in all honor classes still maintaining good grades. If only she could see how much I have grown over the past four years. It is because of her that I plan to enter the medical field as a surgeon and will attend medical school after graduating high school. I hope to help save lives just as she did as a NICU nurse as she has truly been a role model throughout my entire life.

Not only did cancer take away my aunt, it is currently overtaking my grandmother, Jam. On April 6<sup>th</sup> of 2020, she was admitted into the hospital for a blood clot in her leg only to find out a few days later that she only has six or less months left to live as her cancer has gotten

extremely worse. On April 8<sup>th</sup> she was officially admitted into hospice where she will spend her last days. She is never going to come home again, just like my aunt and it's beyond devastating. She can't even have any visitors due to Covid-19 and it is terrifying to think that she can pass away all alone without her family by her side. My heart aches as I have always been close to my grandmother growing up. I would always be over her house while my mom would run errands or go to work. She showed me my first horror movies and introduced me to my favorite childhood singer, P!nk. She would make her delicious egg salad sandwiches and bake my sisters and I warm, homemade, rice crispy treats. She would always ask my grandfather to give us money so we could get McDonalds or what she calls it, "mickeydees". I could not express how truly difficult it is to lose yet another close family member due to this horrible illness. I don't think I will ever be prepared to let another one of my family members go and it is beyond heartbreaking.

Now i place the photos back into the tote, closing the lid as i place it back in the corner of my basement, and i put down the video recorder. The memories are now flooding through my mind as if they had just happened yesterday. I am reminded of the love and irreplaceable memories my aunt and grandmother gave me. Although my aunt is no longer here, I still have some time left with my grandmother. More time to pick up the video camera and make just a few more memories that i will look upon in a few years from now, remembering the happiness and love she has provided me throughout my life. Cancer has affected me dramatically as it keeps taking away my loved ones. I will never be the same due to the loss and pain this illness has caused on my family. I truly hope that one day a cure for even the most intense cancers will be found to save people like my aunt and grandmother. Until then, the terrors of cancer will forever haunt me.