2022 Ben Strauss Youth Program

Middle School

Teen Essay Contest

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A Bad Dream

April 20th, 2019. The day that changed my life. It was a random day in 5th grade that flipped my world upside down. The day was fairly normal until I came home to my parents sitting around my kitchen table with a dull expression. It was at this moment that I knew something was wrong. My parents don’t greet me this way. “Sweetie, your mom has breast cancer.” These 6 words tore my heart into a million pieces and are now all I remember from that day. Later that night, I remember laying in my bed praying that my mom beats this monster… a monster that tears families and millions of people apart every year.

The next few months of my life went faster than the speed of light. I watched my mom go through gruesome treatments that changed the way we lived. Her bad days were Thursdays. Every Thursday she was tired and beat up but continued fighting and got us off to school. I began to dread Mondays, that was when she received her chemotherapy and during the day my mind just went straight to her. She was all I thought about, she brought me into this world, and I trusted her with everything. I was an 11-year-old young girl so scared to lose my mom, but she was a warrior.

That summer I didn’t want to go to camp or sign up for anything. I stuck by my mom’s side, I was so scared of this disease and how unpredictable it can be. Cancer just crawls into your life without any warning at a time you’d never expect.

Watching my mom, my biggest supporter, and my biggest role model go through something this scary was so hard. Looking back, 11-year-old me fell into a depression. I was numb, terrified, and I felt hopeless. However, despite all these emotions I was experiencing I found myself inspired by my mom’s strength. She fought like a soldier in a battle without fear that this battle could end her life. She fought so bravely for our family.

She continued to do what the doctors said and eventually she was ready to have her surgeries. The first surgery came by and that was one of the most scariest moments of my life. October 5th, 2020. A new school year had started, and my new teacher didn’t know the situation that my family was facing. On the day of the surgery, I broke down in class. I broke down because I was hoping for the best but had been taught to always prepare for the worst. My teacher comforted me and told me to take it easy that day, but all I recall is crying, crying in class, at lunch, and on the bus. I spent the day praying and became even more worried when I was informed that the surgery was going longer than expected. It was after dinner that I was finally told that the cancer was removed, and she was okay… but now was the recovery.

The next two years after this surgery were a huge challenge for my family. I thought that maybe after the first surgery we could all begin to heal but there was so much more to do. The stress of making sure the cancer never came back was so high that it was hard to bond sometimes. However, my mom did her best to keep us together the entire time. She got her radiation, took her pills, got more surgeries, and did everything possible to make sure the beast didn’t come back.

It’s now 2022 and my mom is happy, healthy, and in recovery. Not only is my mom in recovery, but so is my family because no one ever talks about the mental toll cancer, or any disease can have on a family. They talk about the disease and the outcome but not the little fractured pieces of heartbreak that you can sometimes be left with. These memories are hard for all of us, sometimes it just feels like a bad dream. No one ever asks for an experience like this, but the unexpected can happen at any time.