2022 Ben Strauss Youth Program

Middle School

Teen Essay Contest

Tristan Shell

My Cancer Story

Cancer has the ability and will to leave a large effect on many of us, through the loss it so often brings, as well as the hardships that come with said tragedies. This has been ever present within my family, since 1996 when my grandmother was diagnosed with cancer. At the time my mother was only 16 years old and I would not be born for a long time.

At first, they said it was not going to spread, and that the only thing we could do would be to monitor it. At some point it started to spread. It made many things which had at one time been simple tasks, quite difficult. During this time, I did not really have the understanding of what was happening around me. I was young. Now that I think about it, she must have had a hard time dealing with the cancer diagnosis.

At the time when it was just starting to spread and become more cancerous, she had to use a cane almost always, even inside of the house sometimes. I remember at the time when we started having to go to the doctor’s more often, was around the time she got the cane. Up until then, these trips to the hospital, had just been no more than reassurance that it had not gotten any worse, or at least only as bad as to be expected with having cancer. Then came the moment, which everyone feared the most. Wishing that we would not leave being told that it had gotten worse faster than expected, or that this would be our last time going there to even have a doctor appointment.

Though sadly, that became the reality, going to grandma’s not just for the weekend but for the whole week, being told that you should say your goodbyes while still given the chance, that grandma would not always be around. I remember when we all went to the doctor’s, my grandparents, my parents, and me, it was just like any other day, the sun was shining bright and there was not a cloud in the sky. But the one difference was we were about to hear something no one ever even dares to think of, that a loved one, someone you hold so dear, that it had not just gotten worse like it already was but that it had spread a lot. All the way to the brain leaving a few months left of life.

The effects that cancer has had on me is unmeasurable, not to mention the people around me. It changed so much of how I look at the world; that so much can change with such ease and speed. That the life you have always known and cherished can just not be because of no more than bad luck. The worst part of it all was just knowing what would inevitably happen with no cure, or way to mitigate. These effects just got worse and worse the sicker she got.

Now in hindsight, I do think that in some way we were lucky considering she had been diagnosed with cancer for almost 30 years, which is much more than most get. Even still cancer is always a burden, disrupting the way of life for those who are affected; taking loved ones early without warning or before their time.