2023 Ben Strauss Youth Program

Middle School

Teen Essay Contest

2nd Place Winner

Caleb Edwin

Making the Best of Everyday

Knock, knock knock…

“Come in,” I said. There was a slight creak as my parents opened the door to my room. I glanced up from my iPad and immediately realized that this visit wasn’t going to be good news from the tears in my mother’s eyes.

I distinctly remember my parents telling me that doctors had found a cancer tumor in Pop-pops chest. This wasn’t the first time I had heard these words. My Mom-mom and Pop-pop were long time survivors of breast cancer, so this news wasn’t very unusual or surprising. In fact, most years my family would attend and run the race for the cure event in Philadelphia. So, I kind of just took it lightly and knew Pop-pop was going to beat it.

Sometime after my parents broke this news to me my whole family got together and my Pop-pop was wearing an eye patch due to the cancer spreading to his eye. One day my family met up at my grandparents’ house and the news came and interviewed my family and it got put on CBS! I thought that was the coolest thing ever!

As the months went on my family started meeting more and more knowing there wasn’t very much time left. One particular memory I remember vividly was around Christmas time when my Pop-pop lost his hair. Him and my Mom-mom came over for dinner. That night we ate fried chicken and watched the new movie *Daddy’s Home 2*! This was one of my favorite memories with my Pop-pop.

As the winter ended and spring crept in we knew that Pop-pop’s time here on Earth was coming to a close and the cancer had spread to his brain, bones and liver.

On April 7th 2018, my whole entire family went over to my Grandparents house to say their goodbyes. That night my family piled into 2 big couches surrounding Pop-pops hospital type of bed. We watched his favorite show *Arrested Development* and recalled our best memories as a family. We laughed for hours and forgot all about the conditions of the get together. After a few episodes we all went into the room alone with him and said our goodbyes personally.

Making the Best of Everyday

I remember telling him how much I loved him and how funny he was. I wish I could’ve said more but at that moment that's all he needed to hear. The next morning Pop-pop had left Earth and went up to heaven. Although I was sad, I knew he wasn’t suffering anymore and met his savior.

For the next few weeks leading up to the funeral we went over to my grandparents to help clean out his stuff. My Mom-mom gave me a few things of his that remind me of him. One of them was a good humor badge! I love it because it reminds me of how happy and joyful, he always was and how he always put on a brave face for his family even when he was in pain. After the funeral my family went back to his house and celebrated his life like he would’ve wanted us too!

I am writing this essay to show that cancer can take people away from you in your life, but it can also bring your family together! During that time was the closest I’ve ever been to all my family members! Here's how I see it: in life bad things can and will happen and sometimes you just have to take the opportunity

to make the best of it! You can either be a victim or a victor! Tomorrow is never guaranteed for anyone, and as my Pop-pop often referred to *“This is the day the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it*”, Psalms 118:24