

**2024 Ben Straus High School Teen Essay Contest**

**Kaylee Hickey**

**The Affects of Cancer**

Cancer affects millions of people around the world every year, whether it be the cancer victims themselves or their families. I have been affected by cancer through many people that I care for, and while I'm writing this, I am grieving a family friend who has very recently passed from it. It finally gave me the courage to write this and share my experience with people who understand what I and my family are going through.

 My grandmother has cancer, and it affects my entire family daily. I'm over at her house a lot to take care of her and make sure she is alright, and whenever I think back to before her cancer diagnosis, it's hard for me not to dwell on how much it has changed her. She was diagnosed in 2017, and I've noticed a decrease in practically everything that she used to be able to do. She's always sick, and it seems like even when she says she's doing good, you can tell she's not at what her pre-cancer one-hundred percent was. She used to fall and get right back up, get sick, and still take care of me, and now, it seems as though her cancer is amplifying all her pains and sicknesses. She's nauseous almost daily, sleeps significantly more than she used to, seems to find random bruises everywhere, has a lot of nosebleeds, etc. She tries to convince everyone that she doesn't need help, but we know she does. I try to help as much as possible, to lighten her pain and struggle. The whole family constantly checks on her to ensure she isn't pushing herself or putting herself in a difficult position, and if she is, we instantly offer our help.

 To my knowledge, three family members have died from cancer in our family; they were when I was young, so I don't remember it too vividly, but it affects the older members of our family to this day. But, not only family members have affected our family with cancer. Reiterating what I stated earlier, I am grieving the loss of a family friend who has died of cancer. With my grandmother being someone with cancer, it is understandable that she has connected with others who are in the same boat. It is both a blessing and a curse. Yes, it is fantastic that my grandmother has people to talk to about her problems and connect with on a more personal level, but it can also hurt a lot in the end. When she gets close to these people, so do I, and just like our late family friend, it causes us extreme pain to say goodbye. One day, they are talking to all their friends, making plans, and having fun; the next, they are gone. It feels too sudden, like it should've gone differently. It feels so unreal that they were so normal in the days leading up, and then their terminal illness sneaks up and takes them away from you.

 I'm afraid of losing anyone else, afraid of how bad it will hurt, and I empathize with whomever else has gone through losing someone this way. In my family, it's almost like they avoid discussing the inevitable, what occurs at the end of their given life span. And if they do talk about it, it's just about the current problems, what can be fixed temporarily. I hate that people I love have cancer, and I can't do anything more than the dishes to help. I can't take their pain away or keep them alive longer than their given time. Nobody addresses it; they explain they have it, and then it's just there, almost like nothing has changed, and that's the problem. A lot has changed; their whole life is on the line, they're weaker, and it's like they don't care. Though I will say, even though cancer has negatively affected my family in many ways, I will say one positive thing. Cancer hasn't taken who my grandmother and other people were away from them. They are all still an inspiration to me and others; they push harder than anyone I know and try everything they can to prevent it from spoiling the joys of their day-to-day lives, which amazes me.

 People with cancer have to deal with a lot, and the families of the patients have to deal with the negatives of cancer as well. So, while I may not have cancer, I understand how hard it is to know someone who has it, especially in an incurable case. It's hard, but I enjoy them while I have them, I keep mementos of them, and eventually, when they pass, I grieve. You never get over them, but you move on, you remember what happened, who they were, and make them proud by doing your best every day. I hope one day there is a cure strong enough to treat all types of cancer, so that eventually, the people affected by it don’t have to fear a closer death, and so their friends and family don’t have to lose another good soul.