

Remo C. Bertugli Memorial Award Essay

By Stephanie Mitchell - Contestant #6

Throughout my life, my mom has always emphasized to me the importance of volunteering my time and that it is important to give to others. I have had the opportunity to volunteer my time to several organizations and events. I volunteer at the Annual Greene County Relay for Life, spent last summer candy-stripping one day a week at Southwest Regional Medical Center, taught dancing at the dance studio I dance at, and this summer I am babysitting. I did not fully understand her reason for stressing the importance of volunteering, until my mom was diagnosed with lung cancer in the fall of 2008. That is when volunteering my time to events like Greene County's Relay for Life took on a whole new meaning to me. It touched my life in a whole new way and took on a personal meaning to me. I quickly became more aware of how this event supports the fight against cancer and the people fighting cancer. The survivors are honored and the ones that lost their battle are remembered.

Cancer is a serious illness that affects 11,958,000 lives and families each year. Growing older I have become more aware of what cancer does to the family of the cancer patient. This event gives the community the opportunity to offer support and hope to those families that have been touched by this horrible illness. Being the daughter of a living cancer survivor, I tell everyone to cherish every possible moment. For cancer patients, moments shared with their family and friends are ones that are cherished and these moments give them the opportunity to take their minds off of their battle. For those that lose a loved one, they are moments that will forever be remembered.

I know when my mother was feeling ill, I would make sure that she knew that everyone in the family loved her and would never stop praying until she overcame her fight. As the years have passed since her surgery, she has been to many appointments. She dreads these appointments each year, but is relieved when she hears the words "cancer-free" from her doctor. This December will be four years since she had her surgery and I am proud to say that she is still cancer free. Since her diagnosis, I have found that volunteering at Relay for Life and helping raise money for cancer research, has changed my life. I know how the families feel when someone in their family is diagnosed with any kind of cancer. My life has forever been changed by my mother's illness but I know that the little part that I do to support Relay for Life in her honor will help someone somehow. I can only hope that the time that I give volunteering will help make a difference. I know that volunteering has definitely made a difference in my life and it is something that I will continue to do for years to come.