

Smiles Filled With Love

By: Abby Hassert

At age thirteen, I know I cannot find the cure for cancer, but that does not mean I can't do my part in helping fight it off. Why do I care, you may be wondering? Yet to me the answer is in the question: how couldn't I care? Taking a look at the number of friends and family members I have lost to this deadly disease, including grandparents, aunts and more, caused me to decide to do something to help.

When I was in the fifth grade, my sister and I wanted to do something to help kids in our area who were suffering from various types of cancer. We decided to hold a dance for boys and girls in the fifth and sixth grades, but first we needed a plan. We talked and talked and we finally agreed we wanted to hold it at the Hebron Fire Department fire house. Yet, in order to have the dance at the fire department, we would need to talk to Chief Martin.

Talking to Chief Martin was very intimidating, especially in the eyes of a fifth grader. He was tall and had white hair and a permanent scowl on his face. Eventually we got up the courage to talk to him about our plan. We told him how we wanted to hold a dance in which all the profits would go to pediatric cancer awareness research. We asked him if we could use the firehouse on a Friday night in April. He was thrilled. He said we would be able to hold the dance there, and he would make sure all the trucks were out of the garage to clear space. But there would be a lot of work to do.

From making posters to mopping floors to gathering a crowd, we knew this dance would not be easy. We would need to research in order to find a DJ who would provide music for us, yet wouldn't charge us a fortune. We searched and searched and we finally found a guy, Pat Krogman, who would be willing to provide music for \$200. We then needed to find volunteers who would be willing to chaperone from 7:00 at night until 10:00 at night. We asked if some of the firemen who worked at the firehouse would be willing to chaperone and they agreed.

Finally, the night of the dance came and we were very excited. We gathered up any last-minute needs, and we headed to the Hebron Fire House. After we finished making sure everything was perfect, my sister and I worked a little bit on our homework. We waited anxiously until 7:00 finally came. Volunteers, parents, friends, and co-workers all stood in a circle with us and we bowed our heads in prayer. We thanked everyone who helped make this dance possible, and we prayed that we would make a difference in some children's lives; and then the dance began.

The admission fee was \$5 per person and the cost of drinks and snacks was under 75 cents. With a little over 90 people attending, we raised \$600. When the dance was over and we counted the money, we withdrew the amount needed to pay the DJ and we were left with \$400 to donate. We handed the money to the DJ but he gave it back. He said that he knew that there were little kids out there dying from cancer who needed the \$200 more than he did. We were overjoyed.

After the dance, we began researching organizations that helped kids suffering from cancer of all sorts and we found that there were tons! We then came across an organization called "CancerFree Kids," which helped children suffering from cancer.

We did some more research on it and we decided that we would donate our profit of \$600 to “CancerFree Kids.” We called the director of the organization and explained what we did, and they were ecstatic, especially when they found out that the idea came from two fifth-graders. They invited us to an event called “The Butterfly Walk,” where we would present the check to them.

At “The Butterfly Walk,” we saw many people who had done little things such as we did to help raise money for the kids. There were also games, face paintings, contests, food, and much more. After about an hour of food and games, my sister and I were called up to the stage to present our check. We were so proud of ourselves, and I thought in my head, *What if this \$600 just saved some kid’s life?* I was so excited to be able to stand up on stage with my sister and have everyone clap for all our hard work. It had definitely paid off. We were each given a necklace with a silver pendant on it that said “Courage”—it was a “Courage Award.” My mom loved the necklace almost as much as I did.

Shortly after other people had presented their donations came “The Butterfly Walk.” We had paid our fees to be able to walk for about two hours to contribute another small donation to the organization. After the walk was over, we went back for food and we had our faces painted to look like butterflies. It was a blast, but eventually it was time to leave. I left that event with a better outlook on life. I knew then that even the slightest smile could make someone’s day.

Most of you may know that October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month. Recently finding out that my horseback riding instructor, Lynlee Foster, had been diagnosed with breast cancer, motivated me to do something to help. In honor of Lynlee and many other women with breast cancer, a friend and I thought of an idea that would involve our whole school. Our idea was to let everyone come out of school uniform and wear pink attire, but in order to come in pink, you had to bring in at least one dollar or more to donate to breast cancer awareness research. We thought that it would be a good idea to make posters to hang up around the school to advertise our fundraiser, and so we did. First however, we talked it over with our principal to get her permission. With our whole school participating, we ended up bringing in about \$290, and we were all so proud. Our principal donated the money to an organization that helped research a cure for women suffering from breast cancer.

Because Lynlee is special to me, I decided to make a collage of pink objects, pictures and sayings to e-mail to her. She was tickled when she opened it up. She said that it had brought tears to her eyes, and that she had set it as her background on her laptop. I was very touched when I heard this. It just goes to show that whether it’s something as major as a firehouse dance or an out-of-uniform day or something as simple as a desktop background, you can put a smile on someone’s face, as long as it’s filled with love.

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