

16-Year-Old is Raising \$50,000 for Blood Cancer Research After Mom's Diagnosis

by Sydney Sinks, News Reporter
January 31 2024 11:50 AM



EDWARDSVILLE - When Sherry Rosenberger was diagnosed with MALT lymphoma right as the COVID-19 pandemic began, she vowed to make something good out of the bad. A few years later, her 16-year-old daughter has decided to follow her mother's example.

Sherry is in remission and has raised \$50,000 for the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society (LLS) since 2020. Her daughter Whitney hopes to do the same thing in just seven short weeks through the LLS Student Visionaries of the Year program.

"I feel like I'm going to cry again. I've literally been crying every day because I am just amazed at not only our community, but that Whitney actually came to me at the end of last fall saying that she wanted to do this," Sherry said. "It was very difficult for us to go through my cancer journey, especially during a pandemic. And at the end of my battle, the one thing I wanted to do was turn the bad into good...To see my daughter turn it around herself, too, and be able to turn the bad into good, has been the most amazing thing as a parent to witness."

Along with her teammates on Edwardsville High School's varsity dance team, Whitney has started a letter-writing campaign to help spread the word about her fundraiser. As the only Metro East student participating in the Student Visionaries program, her goal is to raise \$50,000 by March 9, 2024, and she is off to a strong start with countless individual donations and donations from businesses.

"When my mom first started her chemo treatment, there was a chain of people coming around, bringing around food, gifts for my family and I, just because they wanted us to feel supported even if they couldn't stay for long due to COVID. They were just trying to make us feel better, and I think ultimately they did," Whitney said. "Seeing the community continue to do that still, four years later, is just really nice to see."

Every three minutes, someone in the U.S. is diagnosed with blood cancer. The LLS organization has helped advance 85% of blood cancer treatment options since 2017.

Aaron Fricke, owner of Nothing Bundt Cakes in Edwardsville and Fairview Heights, knows too well how prevalent blood cancer is. His son was diagnosed with leukemia when he was 6 months old.

Fricke remembers walking through the hospital and seeing kids alone in their hospital rooms because their parents had to work. In addition to funding research, LLS provides financial and educational support for patients and their families so no one has to go through cancer treatment alone.

Fricke's son is 15 now and "doing amazing," he said, but the family hasn't forgotten the ways that LLS helped them and other patients. Both Nothing Bundt Cakes locations will donate 15% of their proceeds every Sunday in February to Whitney's campaign.

"When bad things happen to people, the initial response is, 'Why me, why me, why me?' And we just decided, rather than look at, 'Why me?' it was more of, 'It is us because we're able to find ways to give back and help,'" Fricke remembered. "Our biggest thing is we don't ever want anybody to go through what we went through... We're just doing everything we can to make sure that other people don't have to experience it."

This sentiment resonates with the Rosenbergers. While Sherry is doing a lot better, she is open about the difficulties their family faced in 2020.

But the mother-daughter duo has bonded through Whitney's fundraiser. Nowadays, they spend time together going out to eat or watching soccer games, and Sherry makes it to every dance competition Whitney is in.

"I truly believe that this campaign has brought us closer," Sherry said. "To be able to do this together has really kind of healed some of those wounds from going through a cancer diagnosis and a pandemic, all the heartache and the hurt and all of that, this has kind of bridged the gap of all of that and has been able to heal those wounds."

Whitney hopes the money she raises will help families like hers. She will continue to work with businesses, individuals and her teammates to fundraise \$50,000 for LLS, and she has been stunned by the generosity of the community so far.

"The fundraiser has been absolutely amazing. Seeing the community be so kind to me has been truly such a good experience," she added. "I wish that every community was just like ours."

To donate to Whitney's campaign, visit her [official fundraising page](#). Check out the [Leukemia & Lymphoma Society website at LLS.org](#) for more information about the organization.