

CHILDHOOD CANCER - July 2020



Greetings! I would like to commend DG Peggy Harriman for an excellent job as 2019-2020 Childhood Cancer Chair, raising awareness about childhood cancer and providing concrete actions Lions can take to support children with cancer and their families.

Until I was unwillingly thrust into that world 20 years ago, I knew very little about pediatric cancer, the number of kids diagnosed locally or globally, or how grueling the treatments are. Kids don't get that sick here, in the safe, peaceful Pacific Northwest, do they? I found out otherwise when my active, healthy, beautiful 11-year-old daughter Amanda was diagnosed with a high-grade brain tumor. What a shock! Plus, it was a rude awakening to walk the halls of the pediatric oncology floor at Deaconess Hospital. In the next year and a half, Amanda had 2 brain surgeries, radiation, many MRIs, weekly chemotherapy, hair loss, and IV nutrition. And that was a relatively easy regimen compared to that of many kids I met.

To our great relief, Amanda survived with minimal long-term effects and was able to enjoy a somewhat normal childhood (and give her dad and me immense joy) for 4 more years. Then our world crumbled again. At 17, Amanda was diagnosed with a very aggressive form of leukemia (AML) that was either caused by the chemo she received for the brain tumor or a second primary cancer. Treatment was brutal. She was very sick and spent months in the hospital, culminating in a stem cell transplant that failed after 75 days. In December 2006, the world lost an amazing, loving, compassionate 18-year-old who dreamed of serving people as a Girl Scout leader and pediatric nurse. And my heart shattered in a million pieces.

My apologies for starting my tenure as Childhood Cancer Chair on a depressing note, but I thought you should know my connection to and interest in pediatric cancer. I am looking forward to continuing to raise awareness and assisting District 19E in contributing to the LCI global initiative of helping those affected by childhood cancer survive and thrive. For now, I would just like to add that the wonderful members of Spokane Central have been extremely supportive of our family throughout Amanda's illnesses and since her passing, and we're very grateful! Stay safe everyone!

Lion Connie Hill-Bunch

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Amanda – age 11,
2 months before
brain tumor
diagnosis



Amanda- age 18,
wearing a wig, 1
month before stem
cell transplant, with
mom Connie