

2010 NCCF Scholarship Recipients

Ryan Berardi was diagnosed with acute lymphoblastic leukemia at the start of his senior year in high school, the same day he took the SAT. Although his future study plans didn't change, his outlook on life did. This year Ryan is a freshman at the University of the Arts in Philadelphia, PA, studying industrial design, while he continues chemotherapy treatments. He reminds new cancer patients "there is nothing to be gained from being negative...the reality is you have this disease...try to make something positive come out of it."

Lisa Berman was diagnosed with breast cancer at age 27. While very involved as a choreographer and hip hop dance instructor, her diagnosis motivated her to combine her visual art talent with her dance skills to create an "urban-warrior" jewelry line. She is now studying jewelry design at the Fashion Institute of Technology in New York City. Although told by her doctor she would never dance again, she performed a dance she choreographed about her cancer journey just two weeks after completing her treatments. She encourages those newly diagnosed to "find a project or hobby you enjoy and become obsessed with it, keeping your mind busy and diverting your thoughts from the pain."

Erika Bury was a college senior pursuing a triple major at Virginia Tech, playing lacrosse, and enjoying life when diagnosed with AML Leukemia during her winter break. She immediately began treatments and applied for graduate school when she felt well enough. As has been her dream for years, Erika is now a first year student at the New England College of Optometry, after over a year of hospitalizations due to complications related to her treatment. Still undergoing treatment, she advises newly diagnosed cancer patients to realize "the process is a marathon, not a sprint...the attitude makes the journey."

Shiham Colegial was diagnosed with Hodgkin's lymphoma as she began graduate school. She is now cancer-free and enrolled in a master's of architecture program at Florida International University. She plans to combine her undergraduate degree in business with her love of design to build sustainable "green" buildings. Throughout her treatment her positive attitude overcame any negative news from the doctors. She encourages others to "remain strong..., never lose hope..., you can make the difference in your future, don't ever let anyone else dictate your future."

Laura Duran was diagnosed with invasive spindle cell sarcoma soon after beginning a master's in social work at Boston College. She began studying social work after having cared, for three years, for her brother with severe disabilities following a car accident. Laura is now in her final year of graduate school, is married, and the proud mother of four children. She is currently working as a case worker, assisting individuals with disabilities who continue to live in their own homes. She believes her cancer experience helps make her a better social worker, having seen the suffering from the other side. Her advice to other cancer patients is to "not believe all you read on the internet...WebMD is not a good substitute for your doctor."

Hans Fernandez was diagnosed with testicular cancer earlier this year. He is currently a junior studying English literature and political science at Florida State University. He is undergoing treatment, but continues with his studies and his fight to live, despite the advice of many professors to take some time off. He will be the first in his family with a college degree! Although he cannot swim as actively as he

used to, and he sees cancer as a bigger hurdle than he is used to, it's not big enough to stop him from pursuing his ambitions.

Jimmy Fowles was diagnosed with pediatric brain cancer at age 13 and is still undergoing treatment today. Despite surgery, chemotherapy, radiation, two recurrences, and a doctor who told him he would have trouble finishing high school, Jimmy began as a student at Stanford University this fall. In addition to his academic achievements, he has raised over \$165,000 for the Lance Armstrong Foundation and inspired over 500 people to join the fight against cancer. His advice for others going through treatment is to “stay positive..., stay connected to school, friends, teachers..., and do your best to keep cancer from controlling your life.”

Michael Holderman was diagnosed with periosteal osteosarcoma at age 13, when a large tumor was discovered in his leg. He has had eight surgeries over the past six years and has fought hard to be able to walk again after each one. Throughout high school he has tried as hard as possible to live a normal life, managing for the football team since he couldn't play himself. He is now in his freshman year at Mercer University in Macon, GA. He is studying biomedical engineering, with the hope of making advancements in the field of prosthetic limbs. His advice to those newly diagnosed is “celebrate the good days and do as much as you can to have fun.”

Rachel Lozano was affected by an Askin's tumor of the spinal cord during her senior year of high school. She began studying architecture at college, but after the recurrence of the cancer, decided architecture wasn't what she really wanted. After eight years of alternating treatment and college studies, she is now beginning her first year of graduate school. She is studying art therapy and counseling at Southern Illinois University, hoping to help other patients the way art helped her during her treatments. She reminds new patients “everyone's situation is different; there is no right or wrong way to handle what you're going through.”

Sally Newton was diagnosed with brain cancer as a freshman in college. Despite a recurrence, two surgeries, radiation, and chemotherapy still underway, she graduated and is now pursuing a graduate degree in costume design at California State University. Sally's cancer experience has only served to strengthen her passion for musical performance. She tells new cancer patients “the best thing you can do...is smile! It reassures the people around you and will help you stay positive, too.”

Mario Terrell II was diagnosed with Rhabdomyosarcoma at age 16, at the end of his sophomore year of high school. Thanks to the help of home school tutors, Mario graduated with his class. Just after diagnosis he was asked to be a consultant for a website the University of Minnesota School of Nursing was putting together for children with cancer. He helped focus the website on things patients ages 2-16 most need. He is now studying sports management at the University of Minnesota and reminds us all that “I am constantly learning that although we don't always get to choose our path, we have to enjoy the journey.”

Jessica Weller was diagnosed with breast cancer as she was applying for her master's degree in March 2010. She is currently undergoing treatment while studying at Alaska Pacific University for a master's in counseling psychology. She is married and working as a psychological treatment counselor in a

rehabilitation clinic for troubled teens. Her study will help further her career. Soon after being diagnosed she started a blog at <http://jessicaweller.blogspot.com> to share her experiences. Her best advice to those newly diagnosed is “Don’t question past decisions, look to the future and stay positive.”