

## **2012 NCCF Scholarship Winners**

**Jimmy Fowkes (19)** is entering his third year as a religious studies major at Stanford University. Jimmy was first diagnosed with pediatric brain cancer at age 13. He dealt with recurrences at ages 15, 17 and 19, and is currently undergoing daily chemotherapy treatments. As a high school student, Jimmy was on the honor roll, was named to the National Honor Society and played goal for his JV soccer team. At the end of 2011, when his cancer came back for the fourth time, he was forced to undergo yet another brain surgery. But he remained in college full time. On any given day, Jimmy now takes up to 28 pills to manage his cancer and side effects from treatments. Jimmy is a relentless cancer advocate. He has raised over \$200,000 for the Lance Armstrong Foundation since 2006, organizing numerous community fundraisers. Jimmy was featured in Nike's Tour de France PSA "It's About You". During his 6 ½ years of living with cancer, Jimmy has strived to set an example for others and to show them that despite cancer, you can still achieve your dreams. We are proud that Jimmy is the only three-time award winner in the history of the National Collegiate Cancer Foundation.

**Liz Porter (20)** is entering her junior year at St. Mary's College of Maryland where she is a Theater, Film and Media Studies major. At the age of 17, she was diagnosed with Stage III Ovarian cancer. In addition to being a talented actress, she is deeply committed to serving the community. Liz is actively involved with the Vietnam Veteran's mission to raise awareness around the impact of Agent Orange. She even used a Make-A-Wish grant to travel to Vietnam to bring awareness and donations to children with health issues caused by Agent Orange. She served as a counselor at a Johns Hopkins Hospital sponsored summer camp for survivors and patients of pediatric cancer. During her treatments, Liz documented her cancer experience and spread awareness for ovarian cancer through a series of web videos. She hoped that by sharing her experiences, she could provide hope and education to other teenagers dealing with cancer. Her videos can be found at <http://www.youtube.com/ohcancergirl>. Liz's boyfriend writes that "her joy in living is infectious. She is very much in the 'here and now', always aware of the little moments of beauty and satisfaction that make life rich."

**Maya Moore (19)** is getting ready to start her freshman year at the University of Connecticut. At the age of 14, she was diagnosed with a sarcoma (tumor) in her arm that eventually spread. For three years she battled the disease. Maya underwent 4 lung resections, radiation & chemo. The treatments weakened her right arm, and her writing and art suffered. When she couldn't regain strength, she taught herself to write and draw with her left hand. She did not just become useful with her left, she became a wonderful artist. Despite initial progress, Maya's tumors returned at age 17. She went through at least 5 different chemo combinations and nothing seemed to work. But Maya preserved, and accepted a trial chemo over the next year. Her tumors finally responded. Throughout all this time, Maya continued to keep up with school and her love of art despite extended hospital stays. When it became clear that the tumor in her arm may eventually return, Maya made the brave choice herself to have it amputated. Despite not being able to attend high school with her peers, she was able to graduate and looks forward to starting college in the fall just like her peers. In her essay, Maya wrote that "cancer took away my ability to be ordinary, but has given me the platform to be extraordinary."

**Lex Howard (25)** will begin bachelor's degrees in math and physics at Central Washington University this fall. Lex received his first undergraduate degree from the University of Missouri. He was diagnosed with Hodgkin's Lymphoma at 23 while teaching English in South Korea. After completing 8 months of treatment, Lex was declared to be in remission. But a check-up 6 months later discovered a baseball-sized mass between his esophagus and his windpipe. Lex immediately began chemo, but it had no

effect on the cancer. His survival odds dropped to 15%. He decided to join a clinical trial, which proved effective. Last September, he underwent a bone marrow transfer, and is still in remission today. Lex used his drive and endurance as a competitive college and national swimmer to get him through his cancer journey. He was very active in determining the course of his treatments, researching his cancer and always asked his doctors, nurses and others "What can I do to help?" Lex's girlfriend Catherine wrote in his recommendation that he was also extremely patient and calm during his battle. He never over-reacted to bad news, and was always put his friends and family at ease. She wrote "everyone deserves to be the best version of you, and Lex truly lives the best version of himself".

**Alexandra Munoz (19)** is a sophomore at UCLA. Growing up, she always dreamed of not only attending UCLA, but also competing for the school's gymnastics team. After leaving practice one day her senior year of high school because she didn't feel well, several trips to the doctor finally revealed that she had a rare and aggressive form of ovarian cancer. In spite of the urgency to have her tumor removed, Alex refused to surgery until she completed her AP exams. Only 8 days after the surgery, she returned to her studies while at home so that she could receive A's in her coursework. Alex then began chemo, and shortly returned to gymnastics workouts bald and weak. She competed in several competitions, qualified for Regionals and narrowly missed Nationals by 3/10 of a point. Shortly after Alex's dreams were fulfilled when she was asked to join the UCLA gymnastics team as a walk-on. She will juggle her athletics while she pursues her pre-med studies in an effort to treat young children with cancer. Alex also has philanthropic goals. During treatment, she kept a stuffed dog with her to provide comfort. She wanted to bring comfort to others like her during treatments, so she began collecting stuffed toys. Her first year, she collected 130 toys which she donated to two hospitals. This year, she has been able to collect enough for 5 hospitals. Alex and her family hope to form a non-profit to not only help with the stuffed animal project, but also to provide food cards to families of those being treated.

**Christine de Banate (22)** is entering her final year at California State University where she is president of the Pilipino American Coalition. She was diagnosed with Hodgkin's Lymphoma in 2011 and recently completed her treatments. Christine was teaching English in Costa Rica when she was forced to deal with worsening symptoms. Although she was forced to take a semester off when she was diagnosed, Christine was able to fully resume all of her activities. Christine or "CDB" as she is called by friends, used her position as the head of a large student organization to become involved in raising awareness for cancer. Christine formed a Relay for Life team to support the American Cancer Society and organized a university-wide sports tournament for cancer awareness. Her friends describe her as a leader and a role model, and someone everyone just wants to be around.

**Emmarie Truman (19)** will be entering Michigan State University as junior this fall where she will major in Psychology. After surviving two brain tumors, Emmarie was then diagnosed with Leukemia. Just two months after her brain tumor diagnosis, she made her high school softball team as a sophomore. She pitched a winning season while undergoing chemo and radiation. Emmarie was nominated for Sports Illustrated's Faces in the Crowd and her story was published in the book *Chicken Soup for the Soul- The Cancer Book*. She not only excelled on the field. Emmarie maintained straight A's during treatments, volunteered as a Sunday school teacher, and spoke at numerous cancer awareness events. As a result of her experiences as a three-time cancer survivor, Emmarie wants to become a psychologist to help others with the mental aspects of dealing with cancer. If you'd like to read more about Emmarie, please visit [http://blog.mlive.com/citpat/2008/05/winning\\_spirit.html](http://blog.mlive.com/citpat/2008/05/winning_spirit.html).

**Richard Suarez (20)** is entering his sophomore year at Rowan College. He is currently receiving maintenance treatments for ALL (Leukemia). Richard was diagnosed two days before he was supposed

to move into his freshman dorm. Richard had been recruited to pitch for the baseball team. So when his dreams were interrupted and he was forced to start treatments that would cause him, among other things, to lose 40 pounds, Richard turned his focus on two things that had been taken from him: starting college and baseball. He still began classes after radiation, and eventually moved on campus full time. He was able to participate with the baseball program and received all A's in his first full semester. This was no small accomplishment. One of the permanent side effects of chemotherapy Richard experiences is AVN, which causes severe pains in the bones in his leg. AVN makes it hard for him to just walk up stairs. Richard pushes through grueling physical therapy sessions so that he can eventually be removed from the disabled list and finally pitch a full game. Richard also wants to give back to cancer community. He has worked with a teen group at his hospital and his family raises funds for the cancer center where he was treated.

**Kaitlyn Suarez (19)** will be a sophomore at Union college this fall where she is also on the cross country team. She is a three-time Hodgkin's Lymphoma survivor. Her third bout with cancer forced her to have a stem cell transplant and spend 100 days in isolation. Despite her treatments, Kaitlyn maintained an A average and was named to the honor roll. Kaitlyn was always interested in improving the lives of those around her while in the hospital. She inspired a Teen Night at the medical center where she was being treated, and later returned with her lacrosse team to throw a "Breakfast Club", offering food and coffee to the parents in the hospital. Kaitlyn has been extremely active in the cancer community. She has been a keynote speaker at numerous community events, completed numerous road races for cancer including a half marathon for the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society. She regularly volunteers at bone marrow drives and serves as a mentor for numerous children facing cancer. In 2009, she founded Kaitlyn's Fight Fund which is used for ongoing fundraising for cancer research. Her funds have been used to donate a flat screen TV and Wii for the newly opened Teen Room that she helped plan for her hospital.

**Samantha Loch (18)** will be a freshman at Western Washington University. She is a brain tumor survivor. Not only did she survive debilitating chemo treatments, but her immune system was left so depleted that she contracted a flesh-eating infection. While she was being treated, she began to post positive messages on her hospital room wall. She asked her family, doctors & nurses to select inspirational quotes from her journal and would turn those quotes into illustrations that she posted on her "Wall of Positivity". She ultimately adopted the motto "Smiles Kill Cancer" and participated in a cancer walk while being pushed in her wheelchair by her best friend. Sammy continued to excel in school while receiving treatment and graduated near the top of her class. She raised over \$5,000 for pediatric brain cancer research. As a result of the time that she spent in the hospital, Sammy decided to become a Child Life Specialist to help children and families deal with medical challenges.

**Sara Guevera (26)** will be returning to school for first year as a physical therapy assistant student. She previously received her undergraduate degree at the University of Georgia and immediately established a career in journalism. She is a talented writer and photojournalist, and has received numerous statewide and national awards for her achievements in these disciplines. Sara recently completed treatments for Hodgkin's Lymphoma in May 2012. While she was undergoing treatment, she used her position at the Gainesville Times to publish a series of articles on her cancer battle. She detailed her regime and procedures. Sara wanted to make the unfamiliar familiar and inspire others who may one day deal with cancer themselves. Her articles touched thousands of people. Inspired by her desire to help other, she followed her heart and is switching careers into physical therapy with a focus on oncology patients. You can read more about Sara's story at <http://www.gainesvilletimes.com/archives/62304/>.

**Bethany Elliot (19)** is entering her third year in her pediatric oncology nursing program at Bakersfield College. She completed treatment for a rare and aggressive brain tumor during her sophomore year of college last December. Although she was much older than the pediatric patients in her treatment center, she used it as an opportunity to mentor the younger children. While she was being treated at St. Jude's, she noticed that the hospital's program to give out colored glass beads to children for the completion of each type of treatment or procedure was lacking a bead for proton radiation which was part of her protocol. Beth decided to create and donate the end of treatment proton radiation bead to program. She learned how to make the beads herself by operating a torch, kiln and other specialized equipment. Beth plans to expand her program to three other proton radiation centers across the country. Beth also started a program which makes blankets for cancer survivors and families to use while they are in the hospital during treatments.

**Madeline Decker (18)** will be a freshman at Arizona State University. Maddie recently completed treatments for Stage III Hodgkin's Lymphoma in March 2012 all while maintaining her academic achievement standing in school. Maddie met every stare at her balding head in her high school hallways with a disarming smile and a cheery "Hi!" She found that others sought her out for comfort when they were dealing with cancer in their own lives. Maddie has also shared her story at community cancer awareness events. Maddie is attending ASU while she regains her strength and save money, but eventually hopes to transfer to the west coast to complete her degree in marine biology. She would also like to start her own foundation to help cancer survivors achieve their educational goals.

**Kevin Carrico (18)** will be a freshman at the University of Louisville. He is a Stage IV Hodgkin's Lymphoma survivor. Kevin was a member of the National Honor Society and played four years of football. He was named to the All Resiliency team for student athletes who have gone through a hardship but stayed positive on and off the field. At the onset of his treatment, Kevin was told that he would have to give up the one thing he loved the most- football. However, he refused to give in, pestering his doctors to let him get back on the field as his number of treatments dwindled. Finally his doctors succumbed, and he was able to rejoin the team to play in Senior Night. Although Kevin was always interested in the medical field, it wasn't until his treatment that he realized how much he wanted to help people who are hurting. And it wasn't long before he determined he wanted to be the person in the hospital who eased pain the most- the anesthesiologist.