2013 NCCF Scholarship Winners

**John Head (20)** is entering his junior year at University of Michigan where he is an Aerospace Engineering major. On the morning of his 19th birthday, he underwent a biopsy of a lump on his upper right arm. Two weeks later he was diagnosed nonrhabdomyosarcoma. Although John temporarily put school on hold, he still managed to work 30-40 hours per week maintaining his internship. In just a few short months after surgery to remove the mass and chemo, he began to take classes at a community college. After his treatment, John decided to transfer to the University of Michigan and pursue his passion for Aerospace Engineering. John wrote “Having cancer really makes you think about your life. If I am only going to get one college education, I am only going to have one degree and that degree needs to be the one that will get me a career that I will love (SpaceX by the way!).” In addition to dealing with his own diagnosis, John also lost his father to cancer when he was 6. From a young age, John began supporting himself and his education financially. When he was diagnosed, he did not have any medical insurance. Yet, he persevered, maintaining a 4.0 grade average and a full time job. John is determined to graduate from Michigan, even if he has to take time off to work full time. As TS Elliott said, “Only those who will risk going too far can possibly find out how far one can go.”

**McKenzi Fish (18)** is getting ready to start her freshman year at the Columbia Basin College in Pasco, WA where she hopes to study Business. At the age of 15, she was diagnosed with a Stage IIA Nodular Schlerosing Hodgkin Disease. During her treatments, she founded [www.fancyfeet.org](http://www.fancyfeet.org) to provide brightly decorated flip flops to other children going through treatment. She reasoned that when a child has to spend a majority of their childhood in a hospital room the white walls and box TV can get boring to stare at. She hopes that with colorful flip flops on their feet, other survivors can't help but smile. And when they walk around the hospital, they now have fluffy, fun flip flops on rather than boring hospital socks. Through her organization, these flips flops have made it to 6 hospitals and flipped onto over 400 children's feet. And Fancy Feet has expanded to offer care packages to other cancer survivors. McKenzie’s experience launching and running Fancy Feet have inspired her to pursue a Business degree so that she can expand her organization, and launch a magazine and clothing line both aimed at inspiring young women. In addition to being a strong cancer advocate, McKenzie is a lifelong dancer, and incorporates her love of dance into her fundraisers.

**Emma Livne (20)** will be a junior at Carnegie Mellon University where she is in the pre-med program. She was diagnosed with Acute Myeloid Leukemia (AML) and just completed treatment in January 2013. Emma is a lifelong volunteer who began participating in the American Cancer Society’s Relay for Life at age 13. She is the president of an organization that volunteers in local children’s hospitals. She even taught English to orphans in the Dominican Republic. Despite hospital stays and difficult treatments, Emma never slowed down or stopped setting goals for herself. When doctors encouraged her to walk a few laps around the hospital floor, she walked 34. After she finished treatments doctors said she should try to walk a few blocks. Emma walked 4 miles. And just a few months out from treatment she has already registered for a 5k obstacle run “as one concrete example of an unaffected adventure.” Although she was already committed to becoming a doctor prior to her diagnosis, her experience with AML has opened her eyes to specializing in Pediatric Oncology so that she can make a sustainable difference and share the power of perspective that cancer gave her. She writes “Not everyone was fortunate to have an army of support behind them, and I know that sometimes even that isn’t enough. Sometimes you need to have someone who truly knows what you are going through. I want to serve as a source of strength, a shoulder to lean on, and a way of feeling less alone.”
**Lashikeerah Walker (23)** is a sophomore at Essex County College majoring in Accounting. She was first diagnosed with Acute Promyeloctyic Leukemia at age 17, and relapsed at age 20. She completed her most treatment in April 2013. Lashikeerah’s treatments left her hospitalized for three months, unable to walk alone for two months and unable to speak for three weeks. She missed her prom, and graduated after being home-schooled for the better part of her senior year. APL forced Lashikeerah to delay and then postpone her higher education goals. But although cancer deferred the start of her college career, it never detained it. After five years away from school, she performed so well on her college entrance exams that she didn’t have to take any remedial classes. She has since focused her energy on her education, and was named to the Dean’s list this past spring. Lashikeerah encourages fellow cancer survivors to maintain a positive mindset. She writes “Cancer can affect every part of your body, but not even a brain tumor can change your state of mind.” She shares her positive outlook as a counselor at a camp for kids with cancer, and helps others reach their educational dreams by serving as a tutor.

**Jimmy Fowkes (20)** 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 at the time of his application, was undergoing a month-long course of brain and spine radiation. At the end of 2011, when his cancer came back for the fourth time, he was forced to undergo yet another brain surgery. In 2012, the cancer spread to his spine, and until recently he remained in college full time. He was able to do so despite taking 28 pills a day, managing numerous side effects and leaving campus up to three times a month for treatments. Jimmy is a relentless cancer advocate. Since 2016, he has raised over $230,000 for the Lance Armstrong Foundation. He founded and organized the “Shooting for a Cure” basketball tournament. During his 7 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 four-time award winner in the history of the National Collegiate Cancer Foundation.

**James DeHoop (18)** is entering his freshman year at Auburn University. He was diagnosed with Acute Lymphoblastic Leukemia (ALL) at 17 and is currently undergoing maintenance treatment. James was diagnosed just before his senior year of high school when he was looking forward to being the captain for the football team and mulling over multiple scholarship offers to play college baseball. He had spent his entire childhood thinking that sports would be his future legacy and he worked hard to build it. As an athlete, he hated to lose. James is applying the same determination and focus he gained on the field to his cancer fight. Despite being sick, he never missed a game and supported his team from the sidelines. His letterman jacket is adorned with a patch reading “ALL” because he is proud to have earned it by being a “Cancer MVP”. After his diagnosis, James realized that although cancer may have cost him a professional sports career, he has the potential to build an even greater legacy by pursuing a career as a pediatric hematology oncologist.

**Christine Anderson (27)** will be entering her first year of graduate work in Social Work at Barry University. She was first diagnosed with Multiple Myeloma at age 24 and has undergone two stem cell transplants, two hip surgeries, chemotherapy and graft vs. host disease. Christine is currently undergoing treatment. Christine is actively involved with the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society where volunteers at the LLS office and participates in and fundraises for Light the Night. She also raises awareness for bone marrow transplants through the Be the Match organization. Throughout all her treatments and procedures, Christine’s motto was “It is so much easier to smile and laugh than it is to cry.” Rather than complain that she endure a bone marrow transplant, she refers to it as a miracle that her brother was a 100% match. Her positive attitude will no doubt inspire others. Christine hopes to draw from her numerous experiences with social workers during her treatment- both the good and the bad- to make a difference in the lives of cancer survivors.
Richard Suarez (21) is entering his junior year at Rowan College where he is on the Dean’s list and preparing to take the MCAT’s next spring. He is currently receiving maintenance treatments for ALL (Leukemia). One 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. As a result, Richard underwent stem cell core decompression on his left knee and a bi-lateral hip replacement in late 2012. Richard was a highly recruited baseball pitcher when he entered Rowan College and had to put his athletic dreams on hold. He endured grueling physical therapy seasons in hopes of eventually being removed from the disabled list and finally pitch a full game. Although his hip replacement made a return to the field impossible, it was a conversation with a nurse who also suffered from AVN side effects that shaped his future. She was the only person who had been through the same things, and helped him the way that no other doctor or nurse could because she was speaking to him as a fellow survivor. Now, Richard’s ultimate goal is to become an Oncologist to not only fight cancer, but to treat patients from the perspective of someone who has walked in their shoes.

Joshua Loper (18) will be a freshman at the University of Rochester Union. The day before receiving his acceptance letter, he was diagnosed with testicular cancer and is still undergoing treatment. Cancer has been a consistent presence in Joshua’s life for the past eight years as he watched his mother deal with breast cancer and ultimately pass away in 2012. In her honor, Joshua draws on his mother’s courage and “never-give up” attitude for inspiration. Despite his treatments, he finished his senior year of high school with a 3.6 GPA. A lifelong athlete, Joshua was an all-conference football player and had just been elected as captain of his track team just before his diagnosis. He convinced his doctors to allow him to participate in practices and meets as his blood levels allowed. Throughout the season, Joshua competed in nine events, finished first in seven of them despite only attending two practices. Joshua writes that he was able to accomplish so much because he refuses to let cancer be an excuse or hold him back.

Samantha Loch (19) will be a sophomore 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 and had to undergo ten operations. While she was being treated, she kept a journal. The morning before surgery to remove her brain tumor, Sam wrote “I am planning on suffocating cancer with laughter and smiles, smothering it with hope and positivity and stomping it out with the love and support of my family and friends.” She also 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”. Sammy’s brother explained her attitude- “To Sammy, being positive doesn’t mean always being happy. It means looking for the best in every situation... finding a silver lining.” Sammy continued to excel in school while receiving treatment, graduated near the top of her class and was chosen as commencement speaker. 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. She currently serves as a patient mentor for other brain tumor patients and raises funds for the Relay for Life.

Morgan McDonald (18) will be a freshman at the University of Kentucky majoring in Secondary English Education. She was first diagnosed with Osteosarcoma at age 13, and has overcome numerous surgeries, radiation and five types of chemotherapy over the past 5 years. She is currently undergoing treatment for a recurrence. Despite living a life with cancer or the past five years, Morgan graduated high school with a 3.6 GPA and holds a part-time job. She also completed a medial mission trip to Romania, “figuring it would be a nice change to give medical care rather than receive it.” Morgan writes “I’ve always tried to keep laughter alive because laughter and happiness can kill or take away. That is
really important to me.” It’s this attitude that may explain her reputation as a prankster in the oncology ward. However, Morgan is honest when speaking of the lessons she has learned. In the beginning, she struggled and didn’t want to be known just as “the girl with cancer” and longed for normalcy to return. Wise beyond her years, Morgan now accepts that cancer is a part of her life. Cancer may never be normal, but she is never ashamed of it and takes pride in living “a battle and lifestyle for warriors only.”

**Jimmy Macken (22)** is entering his senior year at University of Wisconsin- Madison where is a dual Psychology and Political Science major. On Christmas day in 2012 he was admitted into the ER with a high fever and rash. The next day he was diagnosed with Acute Promelyocytic Leukemia and was told that 20% of patients die within the first 10 days of treatment. Undeterred, Jimmy began treatments, and refused to let cancer interrupt his education. He attended class via Skype while in the hospital and applied, interviewed and earned an internship with a state senator. In his break in between chemo sessions, he attended a leadership conference for youth in politics. Within only a few weeks of the end his treatment, he will begin his internship and looks forward to graduating. It’s clear that Jimmy is extremely motivated and career focused. Yet, he is also quick to make others laugh, provide comfort and make sure that others felt appreciated even though he is the one in treatment. Jimmy didn’t put his life on hold because of cancer. Rather, he uses his experience to motivate him to pursue his passion-politics and education reform quoting that the “only way around is through.”

**Noah Oloff (21)** will be a sophomore at the University of Idaho where he is studying Environmental Sciences. He was initially diagnosed with Chronic Myeloid Leukemia that mutated to Acute Lymphoblastic Leukemia during his senior year of high school. After initial success with treatments, Noah relapsed, causing him to receive his high school diploma in the hospital. Two months later, his sister was matched as a donor and he underwent a stem cell transplant. Since then, Noah battled host vs. graft disease and had both hips replaced due to erosion caused by steroids needed during his treatments. Although it would be understandable for Noah to pull back, he registered for his first 5k walk this summer. His leukemia is now under control, though not completely gone. Despite three years of setbacks and allowing himself time to heal, Noah gave up on his education and was finally able to enroll in college. At first, he could only complete online courses. This fall, he will attend college courses in person for the first time. As a child, his parents took him to many National Parks and where he grew to love studying wildlife and plants. Now, Noah is excited to be completing his education so that he can one day work in environmental sciences.

**Victoria Sharp (19)** will be a sophomore at Auburn University where she studies Accounting. In high school, Victoria was a member of the National Honor Society, completed 200 hours of volunteer work, played Varsity soccer and served on the student government for four years. And she dreamed of attending Auburn University. During the summer before her freshman year, she developed pain in her legs which doctors ascribed to a pinched nerve. Eager to begin at her dream school Victoria started college on time despite the pain. She made the Dean’s list her first semester. However, by the time she returned home for winter break, the pain had worsened. Doctors confirmed that she had Lymphoma, and the tumors had compromised her femur to the point where she needed an emergency hip replacement. Although she was heartbroken having to trade Auburn for treatments, Victoria remained positive and took control of her disease from the onset. Instead of losing her hair to chemo, she donated it before treatments to Locks of Love. Victoria draws on the support from her family. She watched her grandfather battle lung cancer for years, and draws on his positivity and will to win during her own treatments. Although she is currently undergoing treatment, the whole family speaks in affirmatives when talking about her return to Auburn- it’s not “if Victoria returns” it’s “when Victoria returns”. Victoria writes “I have much more to give to this world and I am only warming up. After all, everyone loves an underdog. So put me in Coach!”
Raeleen Whitt (22) will be a junior at California Baptist University where she is in the pre-nursing program. She has battled Acute Lymphoblastic Leukemia since she was 16, and missed out on her Junior and Senior years of high school. While undergoing transfusions and treatments, Raeleen fought her education, completed 5 courses while being home schooled, earning A’s in each and graduated on time. She initially enrolled at Cal State while undergoing maintenance chemo. After one year of remission, Raeleen transferred schools to pursue a nursing degree. On just her second day of class, she relapsed. Unable to find a bone marrow match, she endured two more years of grueling treatments and side effects. Although her education was delayed, she refused to give up and during her last six month of chemo was able to complete a full semester of courses. Through it all, her best friend describes her as “upbeat and always ready to have fun. She brightens everyone’s day and has a caring heart.” These traits will be an asset to the patients she hopes to treat one day as a pediatric oncology nurse. She writes “I am eager to make a difference in a sick child’s life. Sick children need to be in a happy environment to ease their anxiety…. I can offer them hope for a change and a future.” Raeleen is not waiting until graduation to give back to the cancer community. Since 2007, she raised over $80,000 for Relay for Life and often speaks at events. She organizes a blood and bone marrow drives, sharing her personal story so participants can see that real people like her need blood.

Dana Rye (27) is preparing begin a joint Master’s degree program at the Harvard University Kennedy School of Government and the Harvard Business School. At the age of 24, she was diagnosed with Stage II Colon cancer. Just two years earlier she was scoring goals in NCAA field hockey games. And she had just begun a promising career as a Wall Street bond analyst at Credit Suisse. Dana began pursuing cancer advocacy with the same drive and determination that she did as a college athlete, student and professional. While in treatment, she connected with the Fight Colorectal Cancer organization. Initially, she raised funds for the Central Park Colon Cancer Challenge, walking the event when she was too weak from treatments to run. Inspired by the $30,000 she raised, Dana knew then that she had the story, personality and passion to give a far-reaching voice to cancer survivors. She began working closely with Fight CRC, lobbying Congress to raise awareness and secure funding for cancer awareness. Eventually she was elected as the youngest ever member of the Board of Directors. Dana hopes to combine her education, professional skills and cancer experience to establish her own nonprofit to advocate for patients and help them navigate the healthcare system.

Heather Smith (26) is a senior at the University of Arizona where she is majoring in Religion. She previously completed an Associate’s degree in Philosophy. Heather is a two-time cancer survivor. At 21, she was diagnosed with Carcinoma of the tongue. After two surgeries and chemo, Heather decided to refocus her life and began to pursue higher education. At 24, she was diagnosed with Cervical cancer, and still undergoes hormone replacement therapy. Despite the toll that surgeries and treatments have taken on her body, Heather takes as many courses as she can, has a 3.5 GPA and is a member of multiple honor societies at the University of Arizona. Her attitude is “to live my life as fully as I can, not simply to bring myself pleasure, but also to honor those people who no longer have the chance to do so.”

Bree Taylor (18) will be a freshman at West Chester University. She was diagnosed with Acute Lymphoblastic Leukemia at 16, and recently completed treatments. During treatment, Bree was the oldest patient on the pediatric floor. She served as a role model for younger patients, playing games and holding wheelchair races through the hallways. Prior to cancer, Bree’s life revolved around sports. In high school, she was captain of the varsity soccer and JV basketball teams. As a result of treatment, she developed avascular necrosis in her hips, knees and legs. The condition prohibits her from any lengthy weight bearing activities, and which includes sports and cardio workouts. It will be a lifelong side effect
or treatment. Rather than be discouraged, Bree focuses on ways to serve the cancer community. She has organized and raised funds for numerous events, including the Hope for Cope, Relay for Life and Penn State’s THON. Whether it was staying in a hospital bed for weeks, encouraging younger chemo patients, managing ongoing effects of treatments or giving back, Bree shows us a heart of a competitive leader that hasn’t wavered.

Thomas Walsh (18) will be a freshman at Savannah College of Art & Design. Thomas is a Ewing Sarcoma survivor. To say that Thomas is well-rounded is an understatement. From an early age, he was driven to chase his dreams in sports and performing arts. Not only was he a Junior Olympic ski racer and a National Champion Triathlete, but he also excelled in almost any sport he tried including snowboarding, road biking, mountain biking, soccer, golf, cross-country and track. Thomas is equally talented in the arts where he placed in the Vail Valley Youth Ballet and the Colorado Honors Band. At fourteen, he was presented with the opportunity to attend a special school in Vermont that would allow him to train for the US Ski Team and participate in the school’s musical theater program. That dream was cut short when he was diagnosed from cancer. Soon, Thomas couldn’t play sports or sing. He traveled from his home in Colorado to Boston every few weeks for treatment. Following treatment, Thomas was honest-he had to be realistic about sports and the idea that he would not be able to race. Yet he took a risk, moved across the country by himself, and attended school in Vermont. He writes “I entered 10th grade at an athletic academy with no physical ability and the brainpower of an Alzheimer’s patient. I couldn’t run and I could hardly remember my phone number. I learned how to work my body and mind from the ground up.” Thomas has beaten the odds. He not only returned to skiing, but competes competitively. He not only returned to the stage, but was a finalist in the Broadway part of Billy Elliott. He will graduate with his class, and will study drama and theater in college. Throughout his journey, Thomas kept a journal of his cancer experiences and wrote a blog that he hopes to one day turn into a book.

Arieana Carcieri (24) is currently finishing her nursing degree at Mass General Hospital’s Institute of Health Professions. At 21, Anna was diagnosed with Hodgkin’s Lymphoma and underwent a stem cell transplant that year. Right before her diagnosis, she graduated from the University of Rhode Island with a degree in Nutrition and had to turn down acceptance in their graduate program when she became ill. After her battle with cancer, Anna decided to switch her career goal to nursing. She is now enrolled in an accelerated undergraduate program at Mass General and hopes to become an oncology nurse. She is an active volunteer with the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society, completing over 250 hours with the organization and raising over $25,000. Anna first became involved with LLS before her treatment, and completed their Light the Night Walk the day after her first chemo treatment. Halfway through her treatment, she joined LLS’ Team in Training Program, and began training and fundraising for a 100 mile, one-day cycling event which she completed after chemo. Shortly after the century ride, Anna’s cancer returned and she underwent a stem cell transplant. During recovery, she set a new goal- to complete the New York City Triathlon for the TNT program. Within 5 months of treatment, she crossed the finish line. A month later, she crossed the finish line at the Timberman 70.3 Ironman. Post-treatment, Anna continues to be a relentless cancer advocate, sharing her story with news organizations, students and nursing conferences, as well as being included in several publications. Her goal is to inspire others going through cancer to move forward, set goals and follow their dreams.

Tammie Miura (25) is pursuing her graduate degree in Community Counseling at Gonzaga University. She is a four time cancer survivor who was first diagnosed at age 11 with ALL. A relapse within the first 18 months required her to have a bone marrow transplant. Although she struggled with school, Tammie persevered and overcame lingering side effects of her treatments. Once in college, she became passionate about a career as a Child Life Specialist. Then within two years, Tammie faced cancer twice. She was diagnosed with Osteosarcoma and had her leg amputated. Six months later, she went
snowboarding for the first time. During her senior year, Tammie was diagnosed with Thyroid cancer. She recently completed her last treatment in February. Despite living the past eleven years with cancer, Tammie is determined to help others like her. Since 2005, Tammie has volunteered as a counselor at two camps for children with cancer. She interned at the playroom in the Medical Center for Women and Children. She also currently volunteers her time as child care provider for cancer patients and their siblings. Her advice to others facing cancer is “Keep your head up. It is easier to feel happy looking at the sky rather than the ground.”