

Jason Schwartz

Cancer to Career

Ripped from a football team and an almost perfect eight grade school year, my life was drastically thrown into a whirlwind. It was that fifth day of October in 1995 that those strange words, cancer and leukemia, entered my vocabulary as an importance.

After finding two lumps on my neck, I was moderately concerned and brought them to my mother's attention. Soon after, I found myself diagnosed with Acute Lymphocytic Leukemia (ALL) and on my way to St. Jude Children's Research Hospital. This diagnosis led me into a two and a half year treatment protocol.

Through time spent undergoing treatment, many things changed in my life. First and foremost, I came to know my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Shortly after my diagnosis, my thoughts of being "a boy who was invincible and could do it all alone" were quickly resolved. I realized that it would be impossible to face cancer alone. I knew I needed help from someone much larger than cancer. Jesus was and continues to be my answer today. Everything I do I look to Him for the answers, and thus far this plan of attack at my daily life is working quite nicely.

Along with an enormous spiritual change my entire future goal is no longer one day becoming a professional football player but rather becoming a pediatric oncologist. My desire is to one day help a child live through cancer just as my doctors have helped me.

During the two and half years of treatment and the years following, God has given me a burning and undying passion to become a doctor. I feel that God has given me the determination and drive needed to succeed in my education for a reason. It is not only God who supplies me with the motivation to study and succeed, but it is also many friends who were co-patients that remain in my memory. Walking through the halls of St. Jude and experiencing the comfort of the place is a feeling that I am very familiar with. This same feeling is evident on the faces of so many St. Just children. I truly believe that the medicine is not the only component of a successful protocol. The friendship and comfort from the doctor, the playful attitudes of the nurses (water gun fighting in the halls of the hospital), and the incredible contributions from the general public are all major and necessary components of a cure. I cannot wait until I have the

chance to take part in curing a child of cancer, while in the same time, befriending that child and providing him or her with a one of a kind care.

After completing treatment, I finished high school with a 4.0 grade point average and was named one of twelve valedictorians of my class in 2000; my drive and determination remains. I have completed my first year of college at Louisiana College in Pineville, Louisiana. I have continued to maintain my 4.0 grade point average and hope and pray for the ability to complete my college career with this same average. Because of my devotion and desire to do the best, I was voted most outstanding biology/premed student. I was awarded the Rocky Vidrine Freshman Biology/Premed Award in April of 2001.

As I conclude this condensed version of the last six years of my life, all I can think is “Wow!” It is amazing how God uses certain things to turn a person around. I can remember dreaming of the day I would be on national television intercepting a pass while the crowd went wild. Today, that dream is quite different. I want no national recognition or fame; I want a child to look up to me and feel comfort and see hope. It is my prayer and passion for God to use me to help others like me survive. I want so badly to use my experiences to be able to tell young children that I understand their pain...and **really** understand and **know** their pain.