

***Note to Editors: September is Thyroid Cancer Awareness Month (fastest increasing cancer in the country).***

## **Bite Me Cancer, a Fairfax County Foundation Started by a 17 Year Old High School Student, Celebrates its 5<sup>th</sup> Anniversary.**

Fairfax, VA, September 2015– [Bite Me Cancer](http://www.bitemecancer.org) celebrates its 5-year anniversary this month with its founder, Nikki Ferraro, graduating from James Madison University this past May. Nikki started Bite Me Cancer at 17 years old after being diagnosed with a rare form of Thyroid Cancer just 5 months earlier. She was diagnosed in the spring semester of her junior year of high school. A week after diagnosis and a month before her surgery, she formed a Relay for Life team (named Bite Me Cancer) and raised \$20,000 during the 2 months leading up to the Relay event. Even though Nikki was beginning her senior year of high school, she was driven to start a foundation to keep the support going to help others; and so Bite Me Cancer became a foundation in September 2010.

One of the main goals for Bite Me Cancer is to raise research funds and awareness for Thyroid Cancer. Bite Me Cancer has so far funded 2 research grants and is currently fundraising for its 3<sup>rd</sup> grant. ***“When I was diagnosed, there wasn’t even a treatment available for my kind of Thyroid Cancer. Greater research is needed for better treatment options for all forms of Thyroid Cancer as well as to find a cure or prevention methods. I am so proud of our research accomplishments, but more is definitely needed,”*** states Nikki.

The second goal for Bite Me Cancer is to support and inspire teenagers battling cancer. When Nikki was diagnosed, she didn’t receive specific support for her age group and realized that other teenagers were either sitting in pediatric wards where younger children were receiving the “goodies” or the adult units where nothing was given to the teenagers. ***“Being a teenager is already challenging with becoming more independent, making new friends, juggling all the school work and activities. In this age group, teenagers are trying to find out who they are. Having a diagnosis of cancer, changes everything. They have to depend on their parents much more than they should at that age, friendships are challenging, and they are not given the support they need,”*** comments Nikki.

The Teen Support Bags contain a number of items to help teenagers pass the time, feel not so alone while they are in hospitals or undergoing treatment, and be inspired. Items include: a baseball cap, journal, deck of cards, iTunes gift card, free t-shirt to customize, game book, flash drive with an inspirational video message from Nikki about her own cancer journey, as well as other Bite Me Cancer items that promote the foundation’s “Attitude is Everything” motto. Bite Me Cancer has partnerships with the INOVA Fairfax Oncology Unit, INOVA Fair Oaks Cancer Center, National Institutes of Health, Johns Hopkins University Hospital, Georgetown University Hospital and almost 40 other hospitals around the country. Since Bite Me Cancer started its Teen Support Bag program in June 2012, the foundation has distributed almost 1,500 bags so far. Nikki’s goal is to reach teenagers fighting cancer in all 50 states.

Bite Me Cancer has a board of directors and 5 committees of volunteers. More volunteers are needed! Bite Me Cancer is a member of the Fairfax County Chamber of Commerce, the Reston Chamber of Commerce, the Dulles Chamber of Commerce and the Loudoun County Chamber of Commerce.

For more information about Bite Me Cancer, visit the foundation’s website at [www.bitemecancer.org](http://www.bitemecancer.org).

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