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NEWS

CHS Grad Ferraro Gives Back

Thyroid cancer survivor raises funds for others.

BY BONNIE HOBBS
 CENTRE VIEW

When Nikki Ferraro was a Chantilly High junior, in March 2010, doctors diagnosed her with thyroid cancer — a form so rare, medullary, that it accounts for just 5 percent of all thyroid cancers. Nonetheless, while undergoing treatment, herself, she organized a Relay for Life team comprised of some 25 Chantilly High students.

The team was called “Bite Me, Cancer,” and Nikki designed motivational T-shirts and bracelets for each member. Sales of those shirts, plus donations and pledges received for their participation in the walk that June, raised \$20,000 for the American Cancer Society.

Her efforts caught the eye of Leadership Fairfax, which honors people who've aided and inspired others. And that fall, she was one of four people to receive a 2010 Northern Virginia Leadership Award.

Now a rising sophomore at JMU, the resident of Chantilly's Armfield Farm community is at it again. This time, she's raising money for special support bags to help other teens battling cancer.

“When I was diagnosed, I got support bags from other organizations, but they were more targeted toward kids,” said Nikki. “So I thought it would be cool to do something for teens.”

Regarding her own health, she said, “I'm never really in remission because I still have cancer cells in me. But I have no sizeable tumors, so I'm stable. I have to get scans every six months; my next ones will be in December at Johns Hopkins.”

While she'd rather not have to think about her disease, Nikki says she's fortunate the way things turned out and she's grateful for the support of her family, friends and doctors. Her mother, Sharon Ferraro, said Nikki's strong faith also helped her.

Nikki said the whole ordeal made her grow up faster. “I'm a lot more health-conscious,” she said. “I

don't smoke, and I exercise and eat healthy food.” Along the way, she and her parents formed the nonprofit Bite Me Cancer Foundation, www.bitemecancer.org, to help teens with cancer and to fight thyroid cancer. And now it's partnering with Life With Cancer, the INOVA Fairfax Oncology Unit and Children's Inn (next to NIH) to distribute the special, teen support bags Nikki created.

Included in each bag are “Bite Me Cancer” [BMC] logo items to support and inspire teens during their cancer journey: A special flash drive with a message from Nikki, a hat, water bottle, \$10 iTunes card, bags of candy, deck of playing cards, inspirational song list, plus other items important to teens.

The message tells Nikki's story, so the teens will be able to relate to her during their own treatment. The songs are ones she'd listen to before surgeries and follow-ups. They pertained to her situation in some way and, she said, “I could use the words to inspire me and keep the faith.” They include “Stand” by Rascal Flatts and “What Faith Can Do” by Kutless.

Nikki also hopes to meet some of the teens who receive the support bags, and she wants the BMC attitude of staying strong, being positive and fighting hard against the disease to help give them the push they need to wage their own battles. “It's about not taking cancer for an answer or settling for what your doctor tells you — [especially] if he doesn't say what you want to hear,” she said.

She and her family used their own money, plus some contributions, to start this project, but each bag costs \$50 to produce. So they're currently trying to raise enough money for 100 bags, and donations in any amount would be greatly appreciated.

To see their flyer, go to <http://www.bitemecancer.org/pdf/BMCTeenSupportBag.pdf>. Tax-deductible donations may be made at the Web site, or checks may be sent to: Bite Me Cancer Foundation, 4094 Majestic Lane, Suite 335, Fairfax, VA 22033.

For more information or to become involved with the organization's Teen Support Committee, e-mail info@bitemecancer.org, call 703-709-2539 or go to www.bitemecancer.org. Or check out the Bite Me



PHOTO BY BONNIE HOBBS/CENTRE VIEW

Nikki Ferraro holds some of the items in the Bite Me Cancer teen support bags she's donating to teens battling cancer.

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BUSINESS NOTES

Email announcements to centreview@connectionnewspapers.com. Photos welcome.

Chantilly-based **Creative Dance Center Competition Team** (CDC*CT) was named one of the “Top Ten Dance Studios in the Nation” by Star Systems Talent Competition, an industry leader in its 25th year in the talent business.

This designation was awarded to 10 studios in the U.S. who received the highest composite scores on their top five advanced dance entries in small groups, large groups, and lines/productions during Regional Competition. At Star Systems Regional Qualifier in Basking Ridge, N.J., Creative Dance Center's

SEE BUSINESS, PAGE 5

SHILLELAGHS

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 for a listing of all our upcoming trips and socials.

CHS Grad Ferraro Gives Back

FROM PAGE 2

Cancer Facebook page and Twitter account, @bitemecancerorg.

Since she began BMC, Nikki said her doctors have become warmer and friendlier toward her. "They're impressed, at her age, by what she's doing to help others," said Ferraro. "And they appreciate what we're doing with thyroid-cancer awareness because it's the fastest-growing cancer in the country."

According to the American Cancer Society, said Ferraro, "This year, for the first time, over 56,000 people in the U.S. are expected to be diagnosed with it. That's a 17-percent increase over last year. It's more prevalent in women, but affects all ages and genders."

So she said the BMC Foundation wants people to know about it and learn how to check for it. To do so, she advises people to Google "self neck check" online. Said Ferraro: "I believe we would have caught Nikki's cancer sooner if we knew what to look for."

She said doctors don't know exactly what causes thyroid cancer, but "it's believed that the accumulation of radiation in a person's body plays a part. So people should be careful about exposure to radiation. For example, when getting X-rays, they should ask for a neck guard to protect them."

There's not a great deal of research available on

thyroid cancer, said Ferraro, so Nikki's foundation is partnering with the American Thyroid Association and the Thyroid Cancer Survivors Association. Together, they hope to fund a number of two-year grants of \$50,000 each for thyroid-cancer research by younger scientists.

So Nikki created the slogan, "\$50K for 50K," and — in addition to her teen support bags — she's also trying to raise \$50,000 for a grant to help the more than 50,000 Americans who'll be diagnosed with thyroid cancer this year. Toward that end, she's doing two fund-raisers:

* Wednesday, July 25, she'll give a presentation during a 5:30-8:30 p.m. networking event at Vapiano restaurant, 1875 Explorer St., in the Reston Town Center. Cost is \$15/person.

* Sunday, Aug. 12, from 11 a.m.-2 p.m., will be "Take a Swing at Cancer" at the Dulles Golf Center & Sports Park, 21593 Jesse Court in the Dulles Town Center. Cost is \$30, adults; \$20, students 18 and

under, plus college students with current IDs; and \$5, children under 5. The fun includes batting cages, mini golf, beach-style volleyball and a driving range with automated teeing.

All in all, said Nikki, between the teen support bags and the fund-raising project, "It feels great. It makes what I went through worth it because I'm helping other people."



PHOTO BY BONNIE HOBBS/CENTRE VIEW

Chantilly High grad Nikki Ferraro.

Suspended Sentence for Centreville Man

FROM PAGE 4

Before sentencing, Cook stood and addressed the court. "I've been completely devastated by this," he said. "But more important, so have my family, friends and colleagues and people who've supported me — and it is to those people I sincerely apologize."

Judge Schell then sentenced him to two years in prison, suspending all that time. He also placed Cook on two years active probation and ordered him to have no unsupervised contact with children under 18.

In addition, a DNA sample from Cook was to be taken for placement into Virginia's data base of convicted felons. Schell further ordered him to undergo sex-offender evaluation and treatment and to add his name to the national, sex-offender registry.

Afterward, outside the courtroom, Walsh said Cook — who's now working in the service industry — is "disappointed in his own actions and felt that he let people down. It's a sad case because I think the music community has lost a very valuable asset. It was a poor mistake on his part and he recognizes it."

BUSINESS NOTES

FROM PAGE 2

Competition Team was given the designation "Super Star Studio Award" for having the highest score when the top five CDC*CT dance scores were added together. The team will travel to Nationals in Myrtle Beach, S.C., in July to compete for glory on a national stage.

The Creative Dance Center Competition Team consists of approximately 140 boys and girls ranging in age from 4 to 18. The dancers compete regionally and nationally in lyrical, jazz, tap, open, musical theater and contemporary categories.

For more information, visit <http://www.cdcdance.com>.

David Lareau has been named chief executive officer of Medicomp Systems of Chantilly. Lareau has been with the company since 1995 as the chief operating officer responsible for operations, product management, and business development. Before joining Medicomp

Systems, Lareau founded a company that successfully put one of the first PC-based LAN systems, which used e-mail and groupware, into the Sinai Hospital in Baltimore. Following the success of The Sinai Hospital project, Lareau founded another company that focused on medical billing, which ultimately led him to partner with Peter Goltra of Medicomp Systems.

Summer arrives in style at **Fair Oaks Mall**, where four fashionable retailers are joining the center's expanding lineup. **ALDO** and **Francesca's Collections** have just opened, and **Cotton On** and **Bauer's Fashion Eyewear** will debut in July in the area's premier shopping destination.

Strategic Storage Trust, Inc. (SSTI), a publicly registered non-traded REIT targeting the self-storage market, has purchased an 870-unit self-storage property in Chantilly. The property,

which is 93 percent occupied, is located at 14518 Lee Road in Chantilly between Lee Jackson Memorial Hwy 50 to the north and Willard Road to the south.

Suffolk Construction announced that its Mid-Atlantic Region was selected by INOVA Health System to build the new INOVA Fair Oaks Hospital Medical Office Building IV located in Fairfax. Suffolk Construction Mid-Atlantic was selected based on the company's award-winning national experience in healthcare construction combined with a local team of professionals who are committed to delivering the "Build Smart" approach to healthcare construction management.

RG Group, a distribution company, has opened its new Instrumentation Solution Center branch location in Chantilly. The ISC is located at 14301 Sully Field Circle, Suite A, Chantilly. Visit www.rg-group.com.



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