

Highlighting Teen Cancer

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Virginia Governor Terry McAuliffe reads the proclamation he signed in Herndon on July 31, recognizing the third week of January as Teen Cancer Awareness week in Virginia. Seated next to him is Nikki Ferraro, founder of the Bite Me Cancer Foundation and standing is Del. Ken Plum (D-36).

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PHOTO BY RYAN DUNN/ THE CONNECTION

Governor Proclaims Teen Cancer Awareness Week

Cancer support group witnesses signing of proclamation in Herndon.

BY RYAN DUNN
THE CONNECTION

Virginia Governor Terry McAuliffe in the company of cancer survivors and friends signed a proclamation in the town of Herndon proclaiming the third week of January as Teen Cancer Awareness week in Virginia. The proclamation was signed in the office of Virginia Delegate and former Herndon mayor Tom Rust (R-86) who attended the event with Del. Ken Plum (D-36). Advocates for this proclamation included the Virginia based nonprofit Bite Me Cancer.

Nikki Ferraro formed Bite Me Cancer as a nonprofit foundation in September 2010 when she was 17 years old. Ferraro was diagnosed with a rare form of thyroid cancer in April 2010 when she was a junior at Chantilly High School. Ferraro was determined to lead a Relay for Life team just two weeks after her diagnosis. She named the team Bite Me Cancer and experienced immediate success. When Ferraro decided to create a foundation a few months later, she wanted to continue the legacy of her team name and her foundation became the Bite Me Cancer Foundation.

In the summer of 2010, Ferraro told her parents that she wanted to keep the Bite Me Cancer name alive to continue her focus of raising money for cancer research and to help others with cancer. "When I was diagnosed I was 17, and I was in the hospital in the adult wing," said Ferraro. "It is an awkward age and I just wanted to reach out to that age group specifically so they would know they are not alone."

FERRARO WANTS her foundation to raise awareness and research funds for thyroid cancer as it is one of the fastest growing diseases in the United States. Another one of the organization's goals for this year is to ship out 400 Teen Support Bags to teenagers battling all kinds of cancer, after they distributed 200 Teen Support Bags in 2013.

Ferraro was involved in the legal processes and plans to create the foundation and helped design website logo, as well as the foundation's mission and goals. Ferraro and her parents are grateful for all the pro bono consultants (legal, financial, web design), volunteers, and board members involved throughout the process of establishing and launching the foundation. The organization has a board of directors and advisory committee that meets once a month in Chantilly. Two of the advisory council members include Delegates Tom Rust and Ken Plum. While still active with the organization, Ferraro is now enrolled at James Madison University.

"I was honored to have the governor take time away from his busy schedule to come to Herndon and sign a Procla-



PHOTOS BY RYAN DUNN/ THE CONNECTION
Governor Terry McAuliffe displays the proclamation making the third week of January Teen Cancer Awareness week in Virginia, along with young cancer survivors and state delegates Tom Rust and Ken Plum.

mation recognizing Teen Cancer Awareness Week," said Del. Rust. "I appreciate Nikki, who is a constituent and founded Bite Me Cancer, asking me to introduce a resolution recognizing the third week in January as Teen Cancer Awareness Week. It's important to bring attention to teen cancer and to find a cure."

"I am honored that we are here and glad

that the Governor takes time out of his busy schedule to recognize these young people," said Navy Captain Angela Katson, a resident of McLean. Katson arrived at the event with her three sons, Andrew, Jimmy and Michael. One of her sons has been battling a form of cancer. Attending from Purcellville were Lesa Short and her daughter Keegan Berber. "Nikki is the sort of person to help me go through a lot, she is so helpful," said Keegan Berber who was diagnosed with thyroid cancer. Berber and her family found out about the Bite Me Cancer organization online. "I hope the proclamation spreads awareness," said Berber.

IN JULY the Bite Me Cancer organization



Nikki Ferraro, founder of the nonprofit foundation, Bite Me Cancer, with the proclamations making the third week of January as Teen Cancer Awareness week in Virginia. Standing are Del. Tom Rust (R-86) and Nikki's parents.

became an official American Thyroid Association Alliance for Thyroid Patient Education Member. On Sept. 13, Bite Me Cancer will be one of the five nonprofits chosen to receive donations from "Dancing with the CEOs" event, a fun gala event featuring 12 of Metropolitan Washington D.C. area's top executives and 12 young professionals in a dance competition benefiting five local nonprofits that work with childhood illness.

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— Nikki Ferraro,
Founder, Bite Me Cancer Foundation

"It is an honor to be here, it is an honor, Nikki, to be with you," said Governor Terry McAuliffe. "Cancer is something that affects everybody... It is all about awareness, everyone should think about this issue." Filming the signing of the proclamation were volunteers from Herndon Community Television or HCTV. "It was a great event," said Jack Norcross, a student at Herndon High and volunteer with HCTV. "I have always been a positive person," said Nikki Ferraro. "I love how this foundation has been a way for me to cope with things. Hopefully we will get the state fully aware." For more information on Bite Me Cancer visit www.bitemecancer.org.



Herndon HCTV volunteer and Herndon High School student, Jack Norcross, gets a few comments from Virginia Governor Terry McAuliffe after he signed a proclamation making the third week of January Teen Cancer Awareness week in Virginia.