

Sophie Meinhardt Memorial Scholarship 2011

By Ally Duerk

Something I have done that was perfectly free of any personal gain was about 2 years ago. I was on vacation when this happened and my mom got a phone call. She was on the phone for a while and when she hung up she told our family that my Uncle Fred was rushed to the hospital at about 3 a.m. that morning because he couldn't breathe. When we got back home after our vacation was done we expected him to be fine, but it turns out he was diagnosed with cancer. He had it everywhere, but we caught it a little early. The thing about my Uncle Fred is, he is HIV. So this situation didn't look good. Every Thursday my dad dropped me off at my mom's store because he went to go golfing and my mom and grandma and I went out to eat. I would go to my mom's store to say hello and then go to the second floor of her building. My Uncle Fred lives above my mom's work. I went to his house almost every Thursday and stayed there from probably about 4-6 in the evening. I kept him company, took care of him, got him food, drinks and everything else he needed even when he wasn't feeling the greatest. During his chemotherapy I spent more time with him watching movies and more. One night my parents went out and I could have stayed home, but I wanted to go to my Uncle Fred's house. So I went there and luckily he was well enough to get up and walk. So I asked him if he wanted to get some fresh air and maybe a little exercise by walking down the street to Wendy's to get dinner. He said sure. We went and I helped him every step. We talked, ate and had a great time. The whole year and a half my Uncle Fred had cancer I was there to take care of him. Also to keep his spirits up when he was down, I told him how much better he's getting, how this is all working out and how he even looks better. He told me he didn't feel better and I said that's okay as long as you're here you know something is right. He smiled when I told him that. After everything that he went through I was especially happy to spend so much time with him. He and I had a really close relationship before but during the time he had cancer we grew closer.

Today Uncle Fred is alive and well. He made it through cancer! He made it because I never let him believe he wasn't going to. I could tell he was the happiest man alive. He had a second chance for life. We were very close to losing him that summer. It was a miracle I believe. I know I made him happy every time I came and visited because I could see it in his eyes. I'm very thankful to still have him. I honestly don't know how I would have reacted or dealt with him being gone. I'm even glad I sacrificed my time to go and take care of him emotionally and physically. I love my Uncle Fred and I thank God for him being here.