

CANCER



in Spring

By Nili Goldberg, National HOSA Region III Vice President

Three years ago Spring J. Tilman was diagnosed with breast cancer.

After what was thought to be a successful surgical removal of several of her lymph nodes, the doctors were convinced that her worries were over. However, two years after the procedure, she was haunted once again with the lethal disease. The cancer had metastasized into her lungs, liver, bones and brain. As time progressed the cancer began to grow more rapidly than the physicians had anticipated and as a result, there was nothing more they could do. For that reason, on September 3, 2002, one of the most deadly incurable diseases known as cancer claimed the life of forty-six year old Spring.

Cancer takes on many shapes and forms and can evolve in almost any part of the human body. Because of the many types of cancers, there are several factors that contribute to its development. While smoking is the leading cause of lung cancer and sun exposure is the main cause for skin cancer, some factors for other types include: lack of physical activity, alcohol, and certain infectious agents such as, parasites, viruses, and bacteria.

Even though cancer is incurable, scientists continue to produce and experiment with a number of treatments. The two well-known treatments for cancer are: radiation and chemotherapy. According to the Cancer Aid Association, in May 2001, the FDA approved a new drug called Gleevec. Gleevec has been proven to treat a rare cancer called gastrointestinal stromal tumor (a cancer of the stomach). Another one of the latest treatments is Herceptin. Herceptin is used to treat breast cancer. It is known to stop cancer cells within the breasts from growing.

Although Spring's condition was terminal, prior to that she received check-ups and when she noticed the first sign of cancer, she immediately visited a physician. The most important thing to do is to get monthly check ups. In addition, preventative measures must be taken. For example, by avoiding smoking, sun exposure, excessive drinking, and by maintaining a healthy diet, your chances of not getting cancer are far greater. As a society and a people, it is time that we start to take care of ourselves so we don't become another victim of this deadly disease.

Spring J. Tilman was my aunt and she shall always be remembered. Even though I am no longer able to do for her, I can help someone else and so can you. **Make a difference! Become active in the fight against cancer by helping to raise money and/or volunteer for this year's national project, the American Cancer Society.**

