



Jacqueline E. Hirsch

May 30th 1985 – September 6th 2008

Jacquie Hirsch, a 22 year-old student from Geneseo State University, was two months short of completing her student teaching and earning her degree in Early Childhood Education in May of 2007. Jacquie's positive spirit and infectious smile had a positive impact not only on the children she worked with, but everyone who came across her. She competed in the US Junior Olympic Gymnastics program, was a high school diver at Williamsville North and a collegiate competitor for the Geneseo Blue Wave.

On September 28, 2007, Jacquie woke up to a routine day of student teaching only to be admitted to her first round of chemotherapy twelve hours later at Roswell Park Cancer Institute. A trip to the local hospital for blurred vision found that her level of white blood cells was twenty times higher than normal. She was diagnosed with Acute Lymphocytic Leukemia and was immediately put on a national search to find a match for bone marrow and stem cell transplants.

A donor was found and on February 11, 2008, Jacquie was admitted into Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center in New York City. She spent three months at Hope Lodge after receiving a genetic altering bone marrow and stem cell transplant. Eleven days short of her discharge date, the leukemia returned. She was flown back to Buffalo to receive chemotherapy. Jacquie overcame infections, fevers, and pills to receive her second transplant in time. This new transplant resulted in a significant amount of Graft vs. Host Disease (GVHD), and her organs began shutting down from the radiation, chemotherapy, and medication.

After spending weeks on a ventilator in a drug-induced coma, the organ failure, return of leukemia, and GVHD became too much for her body to handle. On September 6, 2008, Jacquie passed away with her family at her side. Her fight became our fight, and one month later we held our first **Dancers Give Back** event, which raised \$15,000 in one day. This money went directly to Jacquie's medical team who set up the first leukemia research project of its kind. Last year, we were proud to also give funds towards the construction of the *Jacquie Hirsch for A.L.L. Center*, which will provide families around New York with patient support.

It was Jacquie's greatest dream that we would one day live in a world free of cancer. Thanks to her brave fight, more than 1,200 people are now registered to be life-saving bone marrow donors and more than \$200,000 has gone into the research fund set up at Roswell Park. She was an incredible person who made an impact on her community, and everyone she came in contact with. Thanks to businesses and people like you, her legacy continues as we raise these numbers every year so that stories like Jacquie's become less frequent.

"You can't predict the future, and you never know when your life's plans are suddenly going to change. Learn to appreciate what you have, and take advantage of the opportunities that are presented to you. Appreciate yourself and the wonderful qualities you possess, as well as the qualities of others. Stay true to yourself and always believe that anything is possible."

-Jacquie Hirsch

Dancers Give Back...moving towards a cure

