



With a Little Bit of Faith

— By Sara Edgell



Cancer is one of the leading causes of death in the United States. Unfortunately, it knows no boundaries concerning age, religion, creed or location. When it strikes, it sends individuals and families alike reeling in shock, followed by helpless acceptance and then eager action in an attempt to reclaim the life they once knew, before cancer changed them forever. On August 7, 2012, the Lautzenheiser family learned this firsthand when Faith Rose was diagnosed with osteosarcoma and began her 10-month cancer journey. That fateful day set the family



“To think of her is to think of joy.”

on a course entirely different from the one they'd imagined. This time together, fighting, living and experiencing a life of cancer with Faith, changed everything for Ken and Ruth forever.

When they met in 1993, it seemed as if the stars had aligned. Ken and Ruth knew they were meant to be together, so they were married and soon after began a family. Their oldest son, Drew, was born first, followed three years later by their second son, Derek. Their daughter, Faith, came along a few years later, completing the family of five perfectly. “She was a girly girl, but she would fight and wrestle with the boys like she was one of them,” Ken recalled with a smile. “I remember one time, the boys were going through the house shouting, ‘Boys Rule, Girls Drool’ over and over. Before long, here they came with Faith in tow, chanting right along with them.”

That happy, fun-loving spirit embodied Faith's character and personality in every imaginable way. Even in the throes of her cancer journey, her room-illuminating smile and happy eyes never wavered. Her loves, including animals (especially puppies), playing card games, sneak attacking unsuspecting



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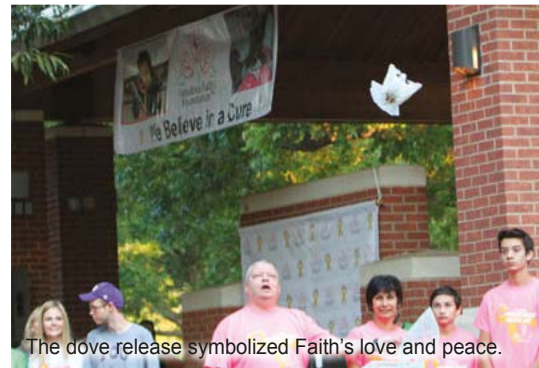
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The dove release symbolized Faith's love and peace.

visitors with silly string, singing, dancing, laughing and reading, were things she unabashedly shared with everyone she knew and met. "She took all of her books from *The Puppy Place* series she loved so much and gave them away to kids at school simply because she enjoyed them so much that she wanted others to enjoy them, too," Ruth smiled. "To think of her is to think of joy."

During treatment and subsequent hospital stays, Faith and her family grew close to the nurses, doctors and other medical staff at the various facilities Faith visited. These individuals could not help but notice the spark in Faith. During one particular procedure, Ruth remembered Faith breaking out in the song, "10,000 Reasons" by Matt Redman. "Before long, everyone in that room was singing with her," Ruth smiled. "I have never seen anything like it."

Although 10-year-old Faith was chosen to take her visit to heaven so soon, her legacy carries on through Fabulous Faith's Foundation, a nonprofit organization created by Ken and Ruth in honor of their daughter. After their experience, they wanted to do something to give back to others, specifically those



with children who had been diagnosed with cancer. “Each day, 43 parents are told that their kid has cancer,” Ken stated.

“We need to do something about this because it is not getting better — it’s getting worse,” Ruth added.

Therefore, the foundation’s mission is to end suffering caused by pediatric cancer. Affected families as well



as medical service providers and facilities are the driving force in promoting awareness and supporting cancer research. “Of every dollar the government spends for cancer research, 96 cents go to adults. Only 4 cents go to children,” Ken explained. “We want to raise money to specifically donate to childhood cancer patients, families, research and those that provide medical care for these kids, because cancer is the No. 1 cause of death by disease among children.”

Ruth and Ken work closely with the board of directors in order to ensure each event and function goes off without a hitch. The board consists of

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individuals with a personal connection to Faith, the family and their cause. “In some way, they are all connected to Faith,” Ruth said.

The foundation’s debut event was held at Rose Memorial Park in September 2015, and it was a smashing hit. The Fabulous Faith 5K came together and ultimately raised \$15,000, which was donated to Cook Children’s Medical Center hematology/oncology child life specialists. The event featured a fun run and chip-timed 5K. There was a deejay, games and lots of family-friendly entertainment for all ages after the race. “People shared with us how impressed they were with how well the event went, especially since it was the first year,” Ruth said.

However, the highlight of the event was the dove release. The dove was chosen because it symbolizes love and peace as well as messenger. On the wings of those doves, messages of love and peace were carried to the heavens that day. “It was such a powerful moment and such a hit with the participants,” Ruth admitted.

“We learned that we had one of the largest turnouts for a first-time 5K in Mansfield,” Ken explained. “It was very gratifying to know that what we were doing was working. It was validation that we were doing the right thing.” Given how smoothly the event went, the Lautzenheisers are looking forward



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to another flawless and successful 5K next month.

“We are planning on making the Fabulous Faith 5K an all-day family event. We will have everything we had last year plus more,” Ruth explained. Games, a dove release and fun for the entire family are all on the itinerary.

In the future, Ken and Ruth have big goals. They hope to have a diverse array of events — one per quarter each year, such as a gala with dinner and an auction. “What are we going to do? We are going to do anything and everything,” Ken affirmed.

Their motto is simply: “We believe in a cure.” And they do believe, with everything they have, that a cure is out there. They also believe that the pain and suffering caused by childhood cancer can be alleviated through their efforts. By educating others and spreading awareness, their efforts can be adopted by others. Their impact will in turn grow. They believe that together, childhood cancer can be eradicated.

Even though Faith cannot be a part of her legacy physically, her spirit and joy live on. Every time her name and story is spoken, Faith lives. Every time her smile and face is shared, Faith lives. Every time another child diagnosed with cancer receives medical assistance, Faith lives. Every time she’s remembered, Faith lives. **NOW**

Editor’s Note: For sponsorship opportunities and registration information, visit www.fabulousfaithsfoundation.org.